

## **INFORMATION TO USERS**

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.** Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

**Bell & Howell Information and Learning  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA  
800-521-0600**

**UMI<sup>®</sup>**

**DISSERTATION**

**MEN, MASCULINITY AND BEREAVEMENT:  
A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION**

**Submitted by**

**Joanna E. Starek**

**Psychology Department**

**In partial fulfillment of the requirements**

**for the Doctor of Philosophy**

**Colorado State University**

**Fort Collins, Colorado**

**Fall, 2000**

UMI Number: 3002099

**UMI<sup>®</sup>**

---

UMI Microform 3002099

Copyright 2001 by Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

---

Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company  
300 North Zeeb Road  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

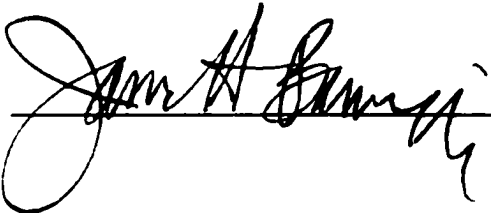
September 29, 2000


WE HEEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY JOANNA E. STAREK ENTITLED MEN, MASCULINITY AND BEREAVEMENT: A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION BE ACCEPTED AS FULFULLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Committee on Graduate Work

  
\_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Advisor

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Department Head

## **ABSTRACT**

### **MEN, MASCULINITY AND BEREAVEMENT: A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION**

Historically, most models of bereavement have been derived from studies on women. Thus, the primary purpose of this study was to study men's experiences of grief without comparing them to women. An additional purpose of the study was to examine how the symbolic interpretation of masculinity influenced men's experiences with bereavement. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine men who had experienced the death of a loved one. The data were analyzed using a grounded theory approach. Results indicated that men use four primary coping strategies in response to loss: (a) setting aside the grief response, (b) instrumental coping, (c) expressive coping, and (d) searching for meaning. Additionally, a relationship was identified between a participant's definition of masculinity and his comfort level with certain coping styles. A Transactional Model of Male Grief is proposed that describes the nature of this relationship. Implications of the findings are that men's experiences with grief are not defined by their sex, but are defined by the context of their experience.

Joanna E. Starek  
Psychology Department  
Colorado State University  
Fall, 2000

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the nine men who were willing to participate in this research project. Mostly, I want to acknowledge each of them for the openness with which they shared their experience of having a loved one die. I learned something from each one of them, and can only hope that this manuscript does justice to the depth of their experience.

I would also like to thank my advisor, Scott Hamilton, for wading through this project with me. Prior to beginning this project, I think I was somewhat naïve about the magnitude of work required to produce a qualitative dissertation. In many ways, I would say that I grew up with this project. In fact, it was one of the hardest papers I've ever written, primarily because I was trying to say something that seemed important to me. Thus, I am thankful for Scott's guidance during that process, particularly as I struggled with the words and the concepts which were emerging in front of me. I would also like to thank Scott for taking a personal investment in me as a student. Although he may not be aware of it, his belief in me as a person, as well as a developing psychologist, was central to my ability to believe in my ideas.

In addition to Scott, I would like to thank my graduate committee. I thank Silvia Canetto for introducing me to much of the feminist literature in psychology. Her classes

were inspiring and helped expand my vision of psychology. I would also like to thank Wayne Viney for his wonderful teaching and mentoring skills. His passion for the history of psychology reminds me that there are still great teachers in the world. Additionally, I would like to thank Jim Banning for the depth of his understanding regarding qualitative research and its methods. In a world full of quantitative researchers, it is heartening to have a strong mentor who can demonstrate the effectiveness of other research methodologies. Finally, I would like to thank Janine D'Anniballe and Laura Perrault for their diligent listening, their assistance with reading and editing, and for growing with me during this project.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
<b>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION</b>	
Intrapsychic Explanations of the Experience of Loss	1
Models of Grief Resolution	3
The Social Context of Grief	5
Gender Differences in Bereavement	6
The Operation of Gender Bias in Psychological Research	8
What We Know About Male Grief	10
Directions of the Current Study	14
<b>CHAPTER II: METHOD</b>	18
The Research Question	18
Evaluator Effect	18
Participants	20
Procedure	21
Sampling	21
Table 1	22
Data Collection	23
Data Analysis	24
Validity	25
<b>CHAPTER III: RESULTS</b>	28
Section I: A Global Description of Participant's Experiences	28
The Core Aspects of the Grief Experience	29
Feelings Associated with Loss	29
Shock, Pain and Sadness	29

<b>Anger and Blame</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Relief</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Isolation</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Confusion</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Contextual Factors Influencing Grief</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Who died?</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>The Nature of the Death</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Length of Time Since Death</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Mediating Factors</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Adherence to Masculine Norms</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>History of Loss</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Culture</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Financial Burden</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Being Present at the Moment of Death</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Other Existing Relationships</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Spirituality</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Personal Maturation</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Setting aside the Grief Response</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Maintaining Silence</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Intellectualization</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Focusing on Other Activities and Relationships</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Instrumental Coping</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Addressing Pragmatic Aspects of Loss</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Taking Care of Others</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Expressive Coping</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Expressing Emotions While Moving</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Expressing Emotions in Private</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Using Ritual</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Remembering the Deceased</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Consciously Staying With Grief</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Seeking Support From Others</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Searching for Meaning</b>	<b>50</b>

<b>Reflecting on the Meaning of Life and Death</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Giving Back to the Community</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Focusing on Universal Aspects of Grief</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Consequences of Coping Styles</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Further Isolation, Depression or Confusion</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>A Shift in Perspective</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Reconciliation and/or Acceptance</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Section II: Masculinity and its Relationship to Bereavement</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Descriptions of Masculinity</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Adherence to Stereotypical Notions of Masculinity</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Being in Conflict with Societal Definitions of     Masculinity</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Rejecting Cultural Notions of Masculinity</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Transcending Traditional Notions of Masculinity</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>General Impressions of the Relationship Between Grief   and Masculinity</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Section III: Developing a Model of Bereavement</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>A Transactional Model of Male Bereavement</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Viewing the Model as a Transactional Process</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Figure 1</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Causal Conditions</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Phenomenon</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Mediating Factors</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Strategies for Managing and Coping with Grief</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Consequences of Chosen Strategies</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Implications of a Transactional Model</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Limitations of the Research</b>	<b>71</b>

Evaluation of Qualitative Research	72
The Contextual Nature of Bereavement	73
Extension of the Dual Process Model	75
Gender Role, Coping Behaviors, and Psychological Health	77
Extension of Theories of Masculine Grief	79
Historical Approaches to Studying Gender	80
Clinical Implications	82
REFERENCES	84

## INTRODUCTION

Grief is an inherently powerful psychological process because it is inextricably linked with the most basic processes of being human. As human beings, we are born, we will die and we will experience the death of someone close to us. Consequently, as psychologists, any attempt to understand grief seems limited by our humanness, yet it is the very "humanness" of the experience that makes the study of this phenomenon both intriguing and overwhelming. Often, the way we attempt to understand grief and loss is indicative of who we are as individuals, as it reflects our attempt to understand the givens of existence: namely life, death, and loss. This chapter examines how the field of psychology has attempted to understand the grief phenomenon, and explores potential ways to elaborate our understanding of the grief process.

In the psychological literature, grief has been made distinct from the process of bereavement by several variables. Bereavement is the state of being that emerges after a significant loss whereas grief is the intrapsychic process that one experiences in attempt to regain equilibrium after experiencing a loss (Cook & Dworkin, 1992). It is assumed that grief is a multidimensional process and that the attempt to regain equilibrium engages all aspects of one's being: cognitive, emotional, spiritual, physical, and behavioral (Cook & Dworkin, 1992). Attempts to understand grief have focused on each of these dimensions at both an individual and cultural level.

### Intrapsychic Explanations of the Experience of Loss

The first theories that attempted to understand the grief process were primarily psychodynamic. These early theories focused on the internal processes of the individual as that person experienced loss. In Mourning and Melancholia, Freud (1917) attempted to define the difference between depression and grief. He defined grief as a process of

hypercathexis, or withdrawing energy from an object, so one can become internally stable enough to cathect energy onto new objects and form new attachments. Volkan (1981), from an object relations perspective, postulated that coping with loss does not simply involve a removal of energy from the lost object, but involves a healthy integration of the lost object into a whole self identity. According to Volkan, difficulties with the grief process occur when an individual fails to integrate the lost object, and instead, forms an introject of the lost object which is carried in the psyche as separate from the self. Thus, for these theorists, grief is experienced and explained as an intrapsychic phenomenon.

Bowlby (1969, 1980) argued that both the object relations and psychodynamic perspectives toward bereavement are limited by focusing on intrapsychic processes. He believed these theories did not adequately explain grief because they did not incorporate the process of separation and attachment, as mediated by both the internal and external environment. Bowlby postulated that grief is similar to the anxiety experienced by infants who are separated from someone they are close to. Thus, grief work involves examining fears and anxieties about safety and survival as a means to being able to form new, secure attachments.

More recently, Busik (1989) has combined Jungian analytic theory with existential theory to explain the grief phenomenon. Busik posited that people maintain an internal equilibrium, which is disrupted during a life crisis, such as a death. When such a crisis occurs, the individual must reassess and redefine who they are in an attempt to regain equilibrium. The depth of this intrapsychic struggle is contingent on how much of the person's ego was invested in the lost object. Often this process involves confronting parts of the unconscious and collective unconscious which have been hidden away in certain archetypes until the death of a significant person is experienced (Busik, 1989). Therefore, grief involves a search for wholeness among the elements of the unconscious and collective unconscious in an attempt to reconcile the realities of existence, of death, and of life.

The intrapsychic theories seem to be most useful in explaining differences in people who experience "complicated" grief reactions as compared to those who negotiate bereavement in a relatively "normal" fashion. Definitions of complicated grief are varied, but stem primarily from Lindemann's work (1944) on morbid grief reactions. Lindemann (1944) defined morbid grief according to parameters of: duration, intensity of symptoms, physical and psychiatric illness, and changes in social functioning. Generally, he believed that grief took on a morbid (or complicated) capacity when there was an excess of any of the above parameters relative to the event that precipitated the grief experience. It is also worth noting that Lindemann was one of the first theorists to highlight the importance of grief work, which involves actively working through the grief experience in an attempt to come to some form of resolution.

### Models of Grief Resolution

In addition to helping distinguish between normal and complicated grief, psychodynamic and attachment theories have had a strong impact on the development of counseling interventions for working with bereaved individuals (Raphael, Middleton, Martinek & Misso, 1993). Specifically, most models of grief resolution focused on working through the intrapsychic phenomenon that one experiences as a direct consequence of loss. Perhaps the most well known model of grief resolution came from Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and her work with terminally ill patients. Kubler-Ross (1969) postulated that grief resolution involved five major cycles or stages:

1. Denial (characterized by numbness or shock).
2. Bargaining (desire that this is not permanent; forming contracts with a higher power).
3. Anger (frustration related to the loss; or, anger directed toward self, others, and/or a spiritual deity).
4. Depression (profound sadness and emotional pain).
5. Acceptance (a reorganization of the loss).

According to Kubler-Ross (1969), as a person works through the grief experience, they negotiate these five stages. Movement through these stages is not necessarily linear as one could experience anger first, followed by depression, anger again, denial, bargaining, and then, acceptance.

Recently, research surrounding the resolution of the grief experience has focused more on tasks that need to be completed to deal effectively with loss, rather than stages through which one progresses. Worden (1982, 1991) posits four tasks that effectively encapsulate the grief experience:

1. Accepting the reality of the loss.
2. Experiencing the pain of grief.
3. Adjusting to an environment in which the deceased no longer exists.
4. Withdrawing emotional energy from the relationship with the deceased and reinvesting this energy in new relationships.

Worden's tasks of grief have been generally supported by the notion of grief work espoused in western culture. Recently, however, a debate has surfaced regarding the necessity of psychological "work" to resolve grief. Stroebe (1992-93) points out that psychologists have confused symptoms of grief (e.g., depression) with necessary components of the grief experience. Subsequently, she has encouraged researchers to examine individual and situational differences that impact the grief experience. She indicated that, at times, it may be healthy to avoid confrontation with grief, while at other times, confrontation of the grief experience will be beneficial for certain individuals.

Wortman and Silver (1989) also criticized the literature on death and dying stating that researchers seem to have strong opinions regarding how others should deal with their significant losses. Specifically, they question the assumption made in the grief work hypothesis that people will necessarily experience various stages of psychological distress prior to being able to resolve their loss. They also question the assumption that if a bereaved individual does not successfully navigate particular stages, then some level of

psychopathology will occur. They state that these assumptions have perpetuated certain myths about appropriate ways to grieve such as: (a) distress or depression is inevitable, (b) a failure to explore distress is indicative of pathology, (c) it is important to work through loss, (d) recovery is expected, and (e) some sort of resolution is reached at the end of the grief process.

Assuming Wortman and Silver (1989) are correct and that certain myths about the grief experience are prevalent in Western culture, it seems worth examining how such assumptions may have been derived. One possible explanation is that these beliefs emerge from the cultural context in which they exist. Recently, theorists have begun to examine the social context of grief and argue that the experience of grief is as much a social phenomenon as an intrapsychic one.

#### The Social Context of Grief

Citing Averill (1968), Rosenblatt (1993) stated that, "grief is shaped by the social context in which it occurs" (p. 102). Specifically, he argued that there is not a universal grief experience, but that grief is dictated by culture, ethnicity, and family systems. He pointed out that cultures differ widely in the definition of appropriate expressions of grief, and stated that it is "impossible to separate an individual's grief from culturally required mourning" (Rosenblatt, 1993, p. 104). Rosenblatt provided the example that different cultures may have different rules about the openness or intensity of anger which can be expressed in conjunction with bereavement. Some cultures may attempt to limit the expression of anger, while others may refrain from regulating anger in response to bereavement, or actually encourage it (Rosenblatt, 1993). In fact, in some cases, culturally-sanctioned, angry, violent responses to death may actually perpetuate more loss.

To explain these differences, Rosenblatt draws on symbolic interaction theory, as well as family systems theory to explicate the process of grief. Symbolic interactionists argue that a loss of any form can lead to a loss of reality. Therefore, grief can only be understood within the context of having lost some aspect of defining reality. Similarly,

Rosenblatt noted that family systems theory implies that our family rules and patterns will shape the loss experience. In this context, grief is often not just loss, but loss of an ability to cope with loss.

For instance, if a person living in a western culture incurs a loss, their experience will be shaped by the mores of that culture as well as by their family system. In the United States, individuals are viewed as a "free standing agents of personal mastery and control" (Sampson, 1985, p. 1204). Yet the way a person internalizes the values of this individualistic culture will be influenced by the culture of their family, as well as the culture of their peers. Therefore, while western society holds certain social mores associated with grief and loss, the person's family system also has rules for emotional expression that will govern the grief experience.

In addition to ethnic culture and family systems, an important variable, which should be considered when examining the social context of grief, is the culture of gender. The assignment of male or female gender to any given behavior by an individual will have a powerful effect on the person's sense of self within a certain culture (Brown, 1990). In addition to impacting sense of self, "assigned gender roles" create expectations of gender appropriate behavior (Brown, 1990; Gilligan, 1982) which may impact the way that individual women and men grieve (Cook, 1988).

#### Gender Differences in Bereavement

It seems that most of the models of bereavement have come from studies using female participants (Carverhill, 1997; Cook, 1988). However, as the study of grief has advanced, more researchers have begun to question whether there are differences in manner that men and women grieve. In a review of the literature, Stroebe (1998) argued that men have greater difficulties adjusting to spousal bereavement than women. Specifically, widowers experience more psychological distress, are more vulnerable to physical health problems, and have higher mortality rates than widows (Stroebe, 1998). Stroebe attributed these differences to the fact that widows and widowers grieve in different social contexts,

with men being more isolated and having less social support than widows. A second hypothesized reason for the difference in bereavement outcome is that men and women use different coping styles. Specifically, in response to loss, women are more likely to engage in emotional sharing, whereas men are more likely to distract themselves and focus on problem solving strategies (Stroebe, 1998).

Other research has supported Stroebe's contention that widowers have a more difficult time coping than widows. Glick, Weiss, and Parkes (1974) found that while widows show more signs of disturbance than widowers during the first year of bereavement, the widows return to levels equal to non-bereaved widows sooner than widowers. Tudiver, Hilditch, Permaul, and McKendree (1992) reported in their study of bereaved men that "men may take longer than anticipated to work through their grief" (p. 147). Similarly, Siegal and Kendall (1990) indicated that in experiences of non-conjugal loss that there is a higher elevation of depression in elderly men relative to elderly women. Finally, Farberow, Gallagher-Thompson, Gilewski, and Thompson (1992) examined the role of social support in the bereavement process of surviving spouses of suicide. Their results indicated that women received more support than men, which facilitated adjustment to bereavement.

Not all studies, however, have supported the notion that men have more difficulty adjusting to bereavement than women. Parkes and Brown (1972) and Sanders (1979) in their studies of bereavement demonstrated an opposite effect, where women exhibited more health problems after the death of a spouse than men. Additionally, Thompson, Gallagher-Thompson, Futterman, and Gilewski (1991) found no differences in grief between men and women after the death of a partner; however, they did show an age effect in bereavement, with older men and women showing more signs of distress than younger men and women.

The greatest differences between men and women in adjustment to bereavement have emerged when studying parent's reactions to the death of a child. Peppers and Knapp

(1980) examined the differences in grief patterns of mothers and fathers who lost a newborn child. In this study, mothers tended to demonstrate a more extreme grief reaction than fathers. Dyuregrov and Matthiesen (1987), as well as Fish (1986), found differences in grief intensity of bereaved parents with mothers demonstrating more intensified grief reactions than fathers. Moreover, in a qualitative study, Defrain (1991) commented that when parents lose infants, fathers often feel the double bind of trying to find healthy ways to grieve and staying strong in order to support others. Results such as these raise the question of differences in coping styles between women and men in response to significant losses.

Schwab (1990) noted differences in coping styles between men and women when dealing with bereavement. Where women use more expressive styles of grieving such as writing, talking, and crying, men tended to avoid painful thoughts and feelings by keeping busy. Schwab (1990) and Cook (1983) also noted that men tend to feel more obligated to take care of other people's grief and are less likely to express their own grief in public.

In examining the studies cited above, several points become salient. First, there has an emphasis on finding a difference between the male and female experience of grief. Second, the differences between male and female experiences of grief which have been found, are not consistent across studies. Subsequently, the existent literature seems to fall short of its goal in attempting to provide useful information concerning how men and women experience grief. An additional observation about these studies is that they tend to reinforce cultural beliefs about the way men grieve. It is possible that men and women grieve in stereotypically different ways, but it is also possible that they do not. Whenever a cultural stereotype manifests itself, it is worth investigating whether gender bias exists in that body of research.

#### The Operation of Bias in Psychological Research

Bias operates in research, "because it represents the accumulated 'common experience' of being a member of a particular group" (McHugh, et al., 1986, p.879).

Historically, women have been assigned the task of grieving in our culture; therefore, their experience can be considered normative, or the common experience (Brod, 1987; Cook, 1988). Research becomes sexist if it tends to over-represent the experience of one sex, and is not equally relevant to the experience of both sexes. (McHugh et. al., 1986). The task of the scientist is to disengage from the common experience as well as the assumptions embedded in the way meaning is constructed when forming the conceptual basis for studying a specific research question. In terms of grief and loss, this disengagement from the common experience requires that researchers entertain the hypothesis that women are looked to as the models for cultural norms about the grief process. If this acknowledgment does not take place, the initial bias will be perpetuated in subsequent research because of the confidence we place on traditional research methods. (McHugh et al., 1986). What is missing is an objective evaluation of the initial assumptions from which these established findings are based. It is important to evaluate these assumptions because it is the conceptual framework which dictates the manner in which research questions are asked. So while the methodology may not be biased, the questions being asked can easily take on cultural or sexist bias.

While it is not clear that there is bias in the bereavement research, it is clear that the treatment of gender as a dichotomous variable has guided the research to focus on sex differences rather than how the social construct of gender may impact bereavement (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988).<sup>1</sup> The omission of the social construction of gender from the research leaves results muddled with regard to truly understanding how gender may or may not impact the grief experience. One way to begin to look beyond the existing frameworks

---

<sup>1</sup>In this paper, the term *sex* is being used when the author is referring to biological differences between men and women. The term *gender* is being used when the author wishes to discuss social and psychological processes which are associated with being either male or female. The term *gender role* is being used by the author to delineate behavior which has stereotypically been associated with either being male or female. See Unger and Crawford (1998) for further clarification of the relationship between the terms and concepts associated with sex and gender.

is to examine the research which has been conducted on male participants that does not compare them to a norm set by women's behavioral patterns.

### What We Know About Male Grief

There are a handful of empirical studies that have focused exclusively on the grief experience of men. Some of these papers are research articles, but an equal number involve clinical insights and speculation about the male grief experience. Brabant, Forsyth, and Melancon (1992) conducted qualitative interviews with 20 widowers in order to examine two cultural assumptions about the way men grieve. They examined the stereotypic hypothesis that men are less emotionally involved in conjugal relationships, and are therefore less impacted by the death of a spouse. They also attempted to examine the possibility that men are strongly affected by death, but cultural prohibitions against displaying emotions prevent them from revealing their true feelings to others.

The results of Brabant et al.'s work (1992) substantiated previous findings by Raphael (1982) about conjugal loss, mainly that the bereavement process is relatively similar for women and men, but the "external manifestations" of bereavement may be impacted by gender. Specifically, Brabant et al.'s study indicated that when expressing their grief, men, similar to women, tended to talk primarily in feeling terms about the experience. However, despite the depth of their feeling, the majority of men tended to cope with their grief alone, as opposed to actively expressing their feelings to others.

In a similar study to Brabant et. al., (1992), Judith Cook (1988) conducted a qualitative investigation of fathers' bereavement. In this study, she investigated the fathers' experiences without comparing their experience to women. Cook speculated that developmentally, the male task in our society is to individuate, therefore the very "nature of men's emotional lives may be the tension between repressed emotions and fear of the consequences of expressing them" (p. 288). She speculated that the societal shaping of adult masculinity will impact the way men express and cope with bereavement.

Specifically, men may be faced with the double bind of finding ways to stay strong and to negotiate the emotional turmoil and vulnerability evoked by bereavement.

Cook's (1988) study indicated that bereaved fathers engaged in four major strategies of grief work, most of which involved a way of handling upset feelings without disclosing them to others. The primary coping strategies included: (a) thinking about something else, or consciously blocking thoughts/feelings about the incident, (b) using reason and reflection to make sense of the death, (c) doing something else, and (d) using solitary expressiveness (e.g., going somewhere by themselves to cry or express anger). The use of reason and reflection as a coping mechanism had not emerged in previous research on bereavement. Cook also discovered that men often find themselves in the role of comforting others during the bereavement process, rather than seeking support for themselves. This paradox seems to engender conflict for men in their relationships with their female partners. Men are often criticized by partners for not expressing themselves, yet they feel pressure to take care of their partners, which seems to negate the expression of their own distressed emotions.

In a qualitative study of widowers, Carverhill (1998) also found evidence that men experience conflict when grieving the loss of a spouse. His study examined the experience of 10 widowers who participated in individual interviews and focus groups. The interviews indicated that men experienced a great deal of loneliness and distress after the death of a spouse. Concomitantly, they felt that there was a lack of understanding from others as to what they were experiencing as widowed males. In addition to limited social support, they felt constricted by societal expectations communicated directly and indirectly by others as to how they should or should not act as a grieving male. Despite communication of what was inappropriate, these men reported receiving little real emotional support and/or guidance as to what was appropriate and acceptable in their process (Carverhill, 1998).

There have been several commentaries written by clinicians specializing in male bereavement which address this inherent conflict in western culture between masculine behavior and participating in grief work. Lister (1991) speculated about aspects of male socialization which could impact the male grief process. Specifically, he cited several studies that examined sex differences in crying behavior, which underscore the observation that men are taught not to cry or express too much sadness. He commented that men's lack of experience with crying can make the behavior frightening when it occurs. With regard to interpersonal relationships, Lister (1991) noted that men are socialized toward instrumental behavior rather than expressive responses. Lister's comments support Cook's (1988) postulation that men try to "do something" when a death occurs. Men are taught to act in the face of adversity, therefore they attempt to cope with their grief through constructive actions rather than reflecting on their experience and sharing their thoughts and emotions publicly.

Scully (1985), a clinician specializing in work with parents who lost a child, wrote about her experience in working with men. She described the intense pain of fathers who grapple not only with their loss, but with the shattering of their identity as "protector" and "provider" (Scully, 1985). She commented that well-meaning friends often neglected to offer them support, and instead asked them, "how is your wife?," thus perpetuating the belief that fathers should be the stronger of the pair. She also noted that many men became methodical in their grief, attempting to subdue their emotional response in order to be able to comfort others. Many of her male clients discussed feelings of estrangement, as they cried inwardly, while simultaneously attempting to maintain a facade of strength (Scully, 1985).

A trade book in psychology (Staudacher, 1991) which focused on the male grief experience further confirmed these observations about masculine grief. According to Staudacher, cultural expectations dictate that men be in control, confident, rational and analytical, knowledgeable, and be the provider. They are not expected to lose control, cry

openly, be dependent, passive, or express need for love or affection. As a result, men do not grieve openly, but grieve in a variety of ways including: remaining silent, engaging in solitary mourning, taking physical or legal action, becoming immersed in activity, or exhibiting addictive behavior. According to Staudacher, each of these coping mechanisms allow men to grieve in a manner which is culturally sanctioned.

In examining the existing literature on male grief, it becomes clear that there is a gap between the psychological research on gender and bereavement, and the assumptions made by those who work with men from a clinical perspective. The logical explanation for this gap between research and clinical lore is that the popular models of grief are inadequate when addressing male bereavement. Two recent papers call for new, more inclusive models of bereavement. Doka and Martin (1998) state that models should include masculine patterns of grieving as well as more traditional patterns of grief. Rather than pathologizing masculine patterns of grieving, they argue that grief models should include masculine coping responses such as: (a) moderating intense feelings, (b) focusing on cognition, (c) engaging in problem-focused activity, and (d) being desirous of solitude.

Stroebe (1998) also posits that current models of bereavement are inadequate and argues that the dual process model of coping with bereavement is a viable framework for understanding gender differences in grief reactions. This model posits that grief is an oscillating process where a person moves between focusing on the loss and developing a new life. According to Stroebe (1998), men tend to engage in more restorative coping (or rebuilding) in response to loss, whereas women are more oriented toward focusing on the loss. Ultimately, according to Stroebe, one will have better overall adjustment to loss if they allow themselves to engage in both forms of coping.

In speculating about new models of bereavement, an issue which needs to be considered is that a model of bereavement should not only include behaviors of white, heterosexual, upper-middle class men, but it should include all men's experiences. In a paper on AIDS-related bereavement among gay males, Schwartzberg (1992) provides an

example of how popular grief models do not adequately address the concerns of all men. Drawing on the work of Averill (1968) and Stroebe and Stroebe (1987), Schwartzberg argues that grief is a social phenomenon. He points out that the gay culture has its own unique ethos separate from the dominant heterosexual culture. Consequently, the gay culture has its own "implicit and explicit rules regarding interpersonal, social and emotional functioning," which may be "interconnected with differences in intrapsychic functioning" (Schwartzberg, 1992, p.424). Schwartzberg argues that grief in the gay culture may be different from grief in the larger culture and may need to be examined differently. He also asserts that the need to re-conceptualize grief models does not stand alone as a gay issue but is "keeping with a trend in the recent grief literature of challenging traditional models of grief, to allow for greater interpersonal and intergroup variability" (Schwartzberg, 1992, p. 428).

#### Directions of the Current Study

Given the limited scope of the existing research of male grief, it seems worth investigating the treatment of gender as it pertains to the male grief experience. The understanding of the effect of gender has been undergoing immense transformation over the last decade since Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1988) challenged the idea of a single meaning of gender. Hare-Mustin and Marecek argue that gender inquiry often tends to either exaggerate or minimize gender differences which then tend to perpetuate conceptual dualism's. Additionally, they believe that our tendency to examine gender as a dichotomous variable ignores the complexity of gender meaning. According to Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1988, p. 456) "gender meanings vary because they are constructed from historical and social experiences and are representations of reality organized by particular assumptive frameworks." Thus, in order to understand the culture of gender, one must understand the social construction of gender for each individual.

The impact of rejecting the conceptual dualism of gender to more fully understand a psychological phenomenon such as grief means that a psychologist must transcend a priori

assumptions about masculine and feminine behavior, and begin to inquire into the symbolic and gendered meaning of behavior for each individual (Brown, 1990). In other words, in order to understand what crying signifies for two different men would require understanding of how crying is integrated into their conception of masculine behaviors, as opposed to assuming that this particular behavior will take on a gendered meaning for that individual man. Thus, the purpose of the present investigation is to more fully understand how the symbolic and gendered interpretation of different behaviors impacts the negotiation of the grief experience for men, based on their individual reality.

In order to assess how the gendered interpretation of masculinity impacts the bereavement process, a series of interviews were conducted with men who had experienced the death of someone close to them. The decision to use qualitative inquiry, as opposed to a quantitative research paradigms is usually based on the epistemological framework of the researcher as well as the nature of the research question. The current research question emerged from the reading of the philosophical discourse of several postmodern feminists (e.g. Hawkesworth, 1990; Scott, 1990). Feminist empiricists argue that much of our understanding of the nature of reality has been altered by assumptions that the experiences of persons with social status in our society can be generalized to all members of society (Harding, 1987). Postmodern feminism takes this notion further and attempts to deconstruct what is deemed natural or absolute in an attempt to expose assumptions of existing beliefs which may skew the understanding of a person's experience. In order to perform this type of deconstructive analysis, beliefs about knowledge, truth, power, gender relations and social stratification are deconstructed in an attempt to understand an experience apart from gender bias (Allen & Barber, 1992).

The effectiveness of this form of inquiry is that it frees the researcher from expectations which are often generated by gender and cultural norms. Specifically, the researcher is encouraged to examine process and creatively induce (and reconstruct) the experience of individuals without placing his or her notions of what should be occurring in

that person's experience. The main criticism of postmodern feminist research is that it may become so relativistic and focused on individual experience that it fails to embrace the solidarity of women's or men's experience, and its meaning for everyday life becomes obscured.

Considering this philosophical discourse, this study attempts to consider the essence of postmodern feminist inquiry (by deconstructing preconceived notions of gender), as well as establish a concreteness in its utility for understanding a psychological phenomenon ( i.e. grief). The most appropriate way to examine this issue was through the use of grounded theory, a method of inquiry developed by Strauss and Barney in 1967. A grounded theory is "one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23); therefore it is most useful when a researcher desires to uncover the nature of a person's experience with a phenomenon. The effective use of grounded theory methodology involves a systematic form of data collection and analysis which allows the relevant data to emerge. The main distinction between this type of data analysis and other research methods is that the researcher does not start with a theory or hypothesis and attempt to prove it, but rather becomes immersed in the data in an attempt to elucidate salient themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The quality of grounded theory research is judged on fit, understanding, and generality. It is assumed that if the data is faithful to reality, it should fit with life experiences. Additionally, it should make sense to the participants in the study as well as professionals who specialize in the topic area. With regard to generality, the theoretical interpretation should be conceptual and sufficiently broad to be applicable in a variety of real-life contexts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

With the presumption that gender will impact men's experience of grief, the focus of this inquiry is more representative of orientational qualitative research rather than pure grounded theory (Patton, 1990). Orientational qualitative inquiry begins with a theoretical perspective which determines the focus of the research. For example, one could orient a

research question to elucidate aspects of Freudian theory with regard to a psychological phenomenon. A feminist perspective assumes the importance of gender in human experience and therefore will orient a research investigation in that direction (Patton, 1990). The strength of an orientational inquiry is that it allows the researcher to elucidate and clarify aspects of a phenomenon. Subsequently, the purpose of the present study was to elucidate and clarify how gender impacts the experience of male grief. Any emergent theory derived from this research will deepen our understanding and appreciation of gender and bereavement, rather than continuing to base this understanding on prescribed gender norms.

## **METHOD**

### **The Research Question**

A basic tenet in formulating a research question using the grounded theory method is ensuring that the question is broad enough to give the researcher flexibility to explore the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As the study progresses, the research question becomes more focused as relevant concepts emerge. The research question for the present study was: How does a man's symbolic interpretation of masculinity impact his experience of grief?

### **Evaluator Effect**

In qualitative research, the primary investigator is inextricably linked with the data, as the researcher is the instrument used for both data collection and data analysis (e.g. evaluator effect). Due to the evaluator effect, it is helpful to think about how the primary investigator may impact the results. Generally, there are four ways that an evaluator can influence the findings in a qualitative study (Patton, 1990, p. 473):

1. The evaluator is incompetent.
2. The presence of the evaluator may elicit reactions from participants.
3. The evaluator will have certain subjective biases.
4. There may be changes in the evaluator during the course of the evaluation (instrumentation effects).

In attempt to monitor the evaluator effect, each of these points will be addressed. With regard to competence of the primary investigator, the main area of concern was that the investigator was capable of eliciting information about a sensitive topic. The primary investigator was a doctoral student in counseling psychology. She had completed the

clinical portion of her training, including a counseling internship that was certified by the American Psychological Association. Therefore she possessed the interviewing skills of a trained clinician and was capable of sitting with deep affect and sensitive topics such as grief and loss.

A second area where the evaluator impacts data collection is the influence of the evaluator on participants. With regard to the present investigation two factors are worth mentioning. First, several participants alluded to the fact that they felt comfortable talking to the interviewer and that they would not have disclosed so much personal information if they had not felt supported and listened to by the evaluator. Thus the content and depth of the interviews was probably influenced by the ability of the evaluator to place a participant at ease. A second area of potential influence was that the interviewer was female and the participants were male. Therefore the content of the interview may have been influenced by the fact that we live in a gendered society and that men may react differently to a female than a male interviewer. For example, the participants may have discussed their perceptions of masculinity differently with a female interviewer than they would have with a male interviewer. Similarly, their comfort level in disclosing personal stories may have been influenced by this female/male dyad.

Another area of evaluator effect is the subjective bias of the interviewer, herself. One obvious subjective bias was that the interviewer was a female attempting to understand the male experience of bereavement. While this may have created some objectivity (e.g. little investment in one notion of masculinity versus another), this assessment was still formed via the lens of a woman who was raised in a society dominated by masculine norms. In an attempt to uncover this bias, the investigator underwent a bracketing interview which examined her own experiences gender socialization, as well as her experiences with grief and loss. With regard to gender socialization, the bracketing interview elucidated that the interviewer had a personal experience of feeling that female gender norms did not always fit her experience of living in the world as a woman. In fact she experienced

periods in her development where she struggled to claim an individual identity apart from society's expectations of her as a woman (e.g. to get married, raise children, be a nurturing individual). This struggle enhanced her interpersonal awareness that there is often a disconnect between societal expectation and personal growth. In many ways, the primary investigator's personal experience was probably the impetus for the development of the research question, which attempted to understand the influence of gender on a psychological process.

A final area of potential evaluator effect is change in the researcher's perspective over the course of the study. This effect was most salient with regard to the interviewer's awareness of her own experiences of grief and loss. At the time of the bracketing interview, the investigator did not identify many significant experiences with death although she acknowledged other experiences of loss. As the investigation unfolded, the interviewer realized that she had a more significant encounter with death than previously thought. Specifically, during the course of the data analysis, the interviewer was able to remember, in much more detail, an accident she was in as a child where she was hit by a car. In the accident, the interviewer suffered head injuries and was unconscious for a substantial period of time, and until recently, was not able to remember the events of the incident. Interestingly, as the present study unfolded, the interviewer was more able to remember her own previous brush with death. Thus, over the course of the study, the significance of a traumatic event in the investigator's past became much more salient. In sum, there was developmental change in the evaluator during the study. This change, however, seemed to be positive in that it seemed to enhance the investigator's awareness of her world view about the nature of death and dying, which allowed her to step back from the data with greater discernment.

### Participants

Research participants were nine men who had experienced the death of someone close to them (child, partner, parent). The period of time since the significant other died

ranged from 2 to 18 years, with a mean of 7.3 years. The cause of death varied; seven of the significant others died of a terminal illness and two died in an accident. The age of the participants ranged from 28 to 62. One participant was Mexican American; the other eight were European American. One participant was gay; the rest identified as heterosexual (See Table 1 for additional demographic information). Data collection was terminated at nine participants since no new themes were emerging, and the criteria for saturation of categories was satisfied.

## Procedure

### Sampling

The present inquiry used a combination of convenience and criterion sampling. The criterion for selection was that the person experienced grief due to the death of someone close to them. There was also an attempt to select participants with varied experiences of loss (e.g. who died, time since death, and the nature of the death). Specifically, it was believed that a heterogeneous sample would facilitate the possibility of obtaining the most information rich data set. It was also hypothesized that the common elements of the grief experience would emerge more strongly from a diverse data set. Similarly, in order to facilitate the potential for participants to have varied experiences with regard to gender socialization, men with diverse demographic characteristics (e.g. age, marital status, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion) were also selected.

Participants were identified via discussions with community informants who knew men who had experienced the death of someone close to them (e.g. the Director of Hospice, colleagues, friends). Initially, the men were contacted by the referring person, and asked if they would be willing to speak to the primary investigator about the project. If the participant agreed to this initial inquiry, the primary investigator contacted the potential participant, explained the purpose of the study, discussed confidentiality, and arranged an interview. Of ten men contacted, nine agreed to participate.

Table 1 Demographics and Contextual Factors Related to Participants' Experience

Name	Age, Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation	Partner status	Occupation	Death of Significant Other	Cause of Death	Time since death
Nate	28 years old Caucasian Heterosexual	Married	Psychologist	Mother died	Cancer	18 years
Peter	61 years old Caucasian Heterosexual	Divorced	Internet Merchant	17 year old son died	Accident	2.5 years
Carl	38 years old Caucasian Heterosexual	Single	Lawyer	Mother died	Un-diagnosed illness	6 years
Adam	62 years old Caucasian Heterosexual	Engaged	Operates a dairy	Wife died	Ovarian Cancer	6 years
Eric	47 years old Caucasian Gay	Single	Lecturer at Australian University	Mother died; Partner, friends	Protracted illness AIDS	5 years Time varied
Andrew	55 year old Caucasian Heterosexual	Re-married	Graduate student in psychology	Father died	Parkinson's	2 years
Esteban	58 year old Latino Heterosexual	Widower	Installs Hi-tech medical equipment	Wife died Parents died	Accident	10 years Time varied
Matt	58 year old Caucasian Heterosexual	Re-married	Non-profit management	17 year old daughter died	Leukemia	11 years
David	51 year old Caucasian Heterosexual	Partnered	Corporate finance	Wife died	Breast Cancer	6 years

### Data Collection

Participants were interviewed by the primary investigator in a private office. The primary investigator was a Ph.D. candidate in Counseling Psychology who had counseling experience in the area of grief and loss. The length of time for the interview was left open-ended, but interviews ranged from 1 1/2 to 3 hours. All interviews were audiotaped, and then transcribed. Prior to the interview, participants signed an informed consent and were instructed that they did not need to answer any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. Similarly, they were apprised of the potential emotional consequences of participating. After the interview, participants were also provided with a list of resources for bereaved individuals, including a list of books and web-sites that address grief and loss, as well as, a directory of mental health providers in their community.

The interview was conducted from an interview guide approach (Patton, 1990). Four subject areas were explored with each participant. However, consistent with the interview guide approach, the interviewer followed up on certain points with greater depth in order to facilitate the participant's exploration of the topic. In many ways, the structure of the interview was similar to a clinical intake interview where the person was asked to describe an experience, and questions were asked to help the interviewer gain a clearer sense of the nature of the experience. No psychological interpretations or attempts to conduct therapy were made. The interview was focused on elucidating patterns and descriptions of the person's experience. The four standard areas queried of all participants were as follows:

1. Participants were asked to describe the experience of having someone close to them die. They were encouraged to tell their experience with as much detail as possible. Some men chose to describe events leading up to the death, as well as their experience afterwards. Others chose to focus primarily on their experience after the person died.

2. The participants were asked to describe any other experiences they had with death, and/or loss, in addition to the death of the significant other.
3. The participants were asked to describe the nature of their socialization process regarding masculinity. For example, they were asked what they thought it meant to be a man. They were also asked how they thought they learned about masculinity and being a man.
4. Finally, the participant was asked whether he thought being a man impacted his experience with bereavement, and if so, how.

#### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed according to grounded theory strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). First, the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, producing about 200 pages of single spaced text. After transcribing the text, the open coding phase of the analysis began. During open coding the interviews were broken down, sentence by sentence, in order to label the phenomena and identify words and phrases which adequately described the data. After labeling the data, the codes were categorized and organized to describe the different dimensions of the data. The organization of codes was conducted by looking for recurring patterns in the data. Specifically, there was an attempt to look for categories of data which dovetailed to describe the data in a meaningful way, as well as, an attempt to look for clear differences among the categories. This process has been defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as looking for internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity of categories.

Open coding was followed by axial coding, which is the process of identifying connections between the categories and subcategories. Specifically, in a grounded theory analysis, axial coding is performed by creating a paradigm model which links subcategories by "denoting causal conditions, phenomenon, context, intervening conditions, actions/interaction strategies, and consequences" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 99). Initially, this phase of the data analysis was done on a case by case basis, in the attempt to

link the subcategories for each participant. Additionally, at this phase of data analysis, the investigator wrote analytical notes and reflective comments about the data. As a validity check, these notes were compared with themes raised in a bracketing interview. By participating in a bracketing interview, the investigator tried to minimize any bias about the meaning of the identified categories.

After linking the categories and subcategories via axial coding, the researcher moved to the final stage of data analysis, selective coding. Selective coding was the integrative component of the analysis where the categories were woven together to form a model of male grief. This phase was an abstract level of analysis and required the investigator to comb through the interviews, seeking data sets that both confirmed and disconfirmed the model which was developing from the paradigm models which emerged from individual interviews. Through this constant comparative analysis, the model became grounded in the original data source, the participant interviews. During this phase of data analysis, the primary investigator conferred with another Ph.D. psychologist who was experienced with qualitative data analysis. The second member of the research team acted as both an adversary and advocate of the developing model in an attempt to challenge and support developing conclusions. This aided the primary researcher in her ability to detect instances from the original data set which did not fit the emerging model (Patton, 1990, p. 468). Data analysis concluded when the model seemed to adequately describe the experience of all nine participants. The organization of axial codes and selective codes is reflected in the *Model of Male Grief* presented on page 64 of the results. In this model, the selective codes are presented in bold and the axial codes are the codes underneath the selective codes.

### Validity

Within grounded theory, there are several validity checks inherent to each stage of data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Specifically, at each stage, there is a constant checking and re-checking to ascertain whether the code or phenomenon is actually reflected

in the words of the participants. For example, during the open coding phase, a second reader was used if there was confusion with regard to interpreting a statement from one of the transcripts. If there was confusion, the primary investigator asked the second reader to read the transcript and offer her interpretation of the meaning of the text. If there was a discrepancy in interpreting a statement from the transcript, the difference in understanding between the two readers was discussed. Ultimately, the code reflected their mutual understanding of the meaning of the statement made by the participant.

A second phase of verification of the data occurs during the axial coding phase where there is an attempt to look for incidents and events in the data which both refute and support the understanding of the phenomenon. This process is called performing a negative case analysis. It is understood that discrepancies in the data provide the variation necessary to fully understand the complexity of the phenomenon being studied. Thus, if the researcher does not look for data that varies from the original hypotheses, the analysis will be incomplete.

Finally, during the selective coding phase, it is necessary to see whether the statements being made in the model have enough breadth to describe each person's experience. If one person's story does not fit the model, then the model is re-formed to include that person's experience. This process is called verifying the analysis against the data, and provides an internal validity check.

As recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Howe and Eisenhart (1990), three additional procedures were employed to ensure the validity of the data analysis. First, the primary investigator underwent a bracketing interview to identify her biases related to grief and gender role socialization. In an attempt to understand the influence of her personal experience on the data analysis, her underlying assumptions were compared against the data set during the axial coding phase of the analysis. Second, the data were compared against other literature on masculinity and grief, in order to provide more of a context for understanding these results. Some of these comparisons are elucidated in the

discussion. Finally, during the selective coding phase of the data analysis, the investigator met with two of the participants to get their feedback about the model that was emerging, and to ask them whether they felt it adequately reflected their experience. This is a powerful form of validity check in that that researcher can learn a great deal about the accuracy of their descriptions from the participants. If the participants can not relate to the description, then it is appropriate to question the validity of the analysis. Both participants stated that the model adequately reflected their experience.

## RESULTS

Results of this investigation are organized into three sections that reflect three different phases of data analysis. The first describes the participants' experience of grief, which was identified via open and axial coding. The second section explains how the identified themes can be conceptualized via the lens of gender role expectations as well as the social construction of gender. The third section integrates the themes identified in the first two sections into a theoretical model of the male grief experience.

### **Section 1: A Global Description of the Participants' Experiences**

The first phase of data analysis was essentially a descriptive analysis of the participant's experiences. By breaking the data down into themes and re-ordering the content of the themes, the grief experience was organized into five categories that reflected the participants' experience. The five categories include: (a) the core aspects of the grief experience, (b) contextual factors influencing grief, (c) mediating factors, (d) coping strategies, and (e) consequences of coping strategies. This section of the results outlines the descriptive organization of the data.

Prior to describing the themes that emerged from the participants' description of grief, the reader should be reminded that there is overlap between all of the described experiences. No theme stands alone, but each represents part of a complex psychological phenomenon. Thus, the reader should expect the content of themes to blend together, as they form a dynamic explanation of male reactions to the death of a significant other.

## **The Core Aspects of the Grief Experience**

### Feelings Associated with Loss

One aspect of this study that stood out was the richness and depth of these men's experiences. All were deeply affected by their loss. Some expressed emotions more overtly than others, but all experienced a great deal of pain, anger, and sadness. Two participants described having "muted" emotional reactions while grieving, but the moderation of their emotions was more related to having engaged in anticipatory grieving, rather than to their interpersonal style. In fact, emotional and cognitive upheaval was central to the grief experience for all nine participants. The most common emotions associated with grief were feelings of loss, pain and sadness. Other responses to loss were shock, anger, blame, envy, relief, isolation and confusion. Some participants experienced all of these emotional states; others experienced one or two of them.

Shock, Pain and Sadness Shock, pain and sadness were frequently the immediate response to death. Even when the death was expected, the finality of the event produced a deep emotional reaction. Adam described the pain and sadness he experienced after his wife, Annie, died of ovarian cancer.

I remember the initial shock of it all, the initial dealing with the finality of it, and the pain of it. I mean I had no idea. I had lost grandparents...But to have someone as close to you as Annie was to me be gone for good...was a kind of pain that I didn't know existed until then....Eventually, the pain goes away, but the sadness about the loss remains. It doesn't remain as a constant and it doesn't remain as a detriment, but it remains.

Peter described the horror and sadness of realizing that his son was really dead:

When I would go to bed at night, I would lay in the bed and there would be this cold, horror feeling that there wasn't going to be any more Jacob....I could sort of see a horizon of time; I could see far into the future and the farther I could see into the future, the more sad I would become because Jacob would be just a dusty memory, rather than a live person.

Anger and Blame In addition to pain and sadness, some participants felt anger or blame in response to the death. Eric provided an example of this response as he commented on his anger at the medical profession after his mother died.

So I think that it was sort of a jumbled feeling. You know often when people die you get those feelings of great and overwhelming sadness and, in mom's case, a bit of relief. And, often you get anger at the person who's dying for leaving you. But I think my anger was at the medical profession. Kind of, "all right, medical profession, you've had your final say – you've finally done it. Now leave her alone you fuckers!" So, I was angry, not at my mom, but at the medical profession, which I keep to this day. And, I ain't letting go of it! That ain't going away, that's going to stay!

Similarly, Peter indirectly blamed his wife for his son's death. He stated:

Um, its kind of complicated, but I say that she actually killed him. That's the way I say it. That takes a lot of explaining, but she kind of had this strange situation with him, where she would tell him she loved him, but then she would act like she didn't.

Peter further explained:

It is almost as if she wanted him dead because when she was pregnant with him, there was this series of events. We had separated and gotten together several times. I mean our relationship was stormy....I left her in the middle of the pregnancy because of things that she did....So, I have a feeling that she had a lot of resentment and somehow that got transferred to him in some unconscious way. You might say that's blame and lack of forgiveness, but I just have a sense that played a part – well he played a part too. I know that.

Nate was angry at the unfairness of his mother's death causing so much hardship for him and his family:

It always seemed so wrong that my mom would die, that my dad would lose his job, and that her dying would have such an effect on our family financially. It just seemed so wrong, so unfair that it happened. I think that was why I got angry. The anger was not directed at her, but if she hadn't died or been sick for so long, we would still have money and life would have been easier. So, that is where a lot of the anger and jealousy came from.

Relief Another emotional response to loss was relief. Andrew's father was ill for two years prior to his death, thus Andrew had a sense of relief that the waiting for his father to die had ended. He described that experience:

I was sad I missed his death. I would have liked to have been there....But I also remember experiencing some relief because the last two years had been really tough on him. There was relief for me as well, because (his illness) was occupying and a burden in some sense. I was also concerned about mom, but I think she was pretty good at the time. I think she was relieved too...She had done a bigger part of managing his life than I realized.

**Isolation** Several men described a sense of being alone after having a loved one die. The sense of isolation was associated with feeling both “different” and “changed” by the experience. This experience of feeling different resulted in the participant feeling even more isolated from others. Adam described his experience:

I felt like I joined an exclusive club of one...In a sense, I felt as if I ought to be bandaged from head to foot with blood coming out so that everyone could see what it was that was going on. When In truth, I looked like I had always looked. And yet, the way I looked is not who I was. I was different. I had this huge loss, this huge thing cut out of me and no one could see it. And in a sense, people really couldn't understand it either.

**Confusion** Several of the men described moments of confusion and panic just prior to, or immediately after the person died, as there was confusion about whether the significant other was still alive. Nate's confusion over his mother's death was compounded by the fact that he was a child and did not have a mature understanding of what death meant. He described his confusion:

I think I experienced confusion at two levels...One was being confused about whether she was going to die? You know, the next time she goes to the hospital, is she going to be alive. That was pretty basic, but the other part of the confusion was just not understanding why any of this was happening. Why is she going to the hospital? I mean I knew she was sick, she had cancer, but why? Why was this happening to my mom? Why wasn't it happening to anybody else? And the confusion was compounded by the fact that no one was talking about what was happening.

### **Contextual Factors Influencing Grief**

The emotions and thoughts experienced in reaction to loss were directly influenced by three contextual factors (a) who died? (b) the nature of the death, and (c) the length of time since the person died.

#### **Who Died?**

At the most basic level, the nature of the grief experience of the participants was directly related to the quality of the relationship to the deceased. The nature of the relationship was influenced by such factors as the duration of the relationship, emotional closeness, and family role (e.g. parent, child, sibling, significant other). Experiencing the death of a parent and the death of a partner can be equally devastating, but the person's

cognitive and emotional reaction to the death appeared to be profoundly affected by who died. For example, after his brother-in-law was killed in an accident, David “avoided” the funeral and tried to push the experience aside. He stated that avoiding the situation was an effective form of coping at that point in his life. When his wife of 17 years died, however, his grief was more profound and he stated, “there was no way I could not let that experience in.” Similarly, Eric experienced different losses, his mother’ death and the death of several gay male lovers. Despite having a close relationship with his mother and close relationships with his ex-lovers, he describes the experience of the losses as being profoundly different.

Oh, there’s a huge difference. You’re talking about a parental figure dying, and all that that means, all that person was to you, how that person molded those parts of you and influenced how you came into who you were...And then you’re talking about watching your peers, friends and lovers die. ..I think they are connected in terms of loss, but I don’t even put them together as similar experiences....I mean we’re talking the death of the person who influenced me versus a lover....With friends and lovers, I think I am much more reminded of my own mortality.

#### The Nature of the Death

The way the significant other died also appeared to influence the context within which the individual grieved. Participant's who experienced the death of a significant other due to an accident had a different experience of bereavement than those who experienced the death of another via illness. For example, Esteban’s wife was hit by a car while riding her bicycle. He described the shock of seeing her being loaded into the ambulance:

I was returning that day from a trip in California....I was driving to the house and I saw the police and the paramedic and the ambulance...Then I saw the bicycle and right away I got the feeling it was her. I didn’t want to believe it, but I parked and sat back, and I saw the paramedics working on her...(he starts crying and is silent for awhile)....I didn’t want to interfere with the procedures so I just waited until they put her in the ambulance and then the police...(silence)...asked me all the questions; her name and all that stuff. So they took her to the hospital and I went right away to the house to find the kids....After I found them, I told them what happened....And I told them we needed to go to the hospital right away because I didn’t know if they would have a chance to see their mom alive again.

In this instance, Esteban's grief was compounded by the traumatic nature of his wife's accident and the grief experienced by his children. Thus, for Esteban, in addition to facing his wife's death, he needed to integrate the traumatic nature of the accident

Adam's wife died as well, yet the nature of her death was very different. Adam was the primary caretaker for his wife who died of ovarian cancer. Thus, his bereavement experience was influenced by anticipatory grief as well as the tasks associated with tending to her process of dying. He was responsible for her physical and emotional care as well as making the arrangements for her funeral and memorial service. His grief experience was therefore influenced by the intimacy of the caretaking role. He described the intimate quality of their relationship and how it was influenced by her illness:

Certainly, Annie and I had talked a good deal about her dying. I mean ...her disease and her death, over the course of the four years that we knew each other, were pretty much a constant companion. It was like a third party to our relationship. It was part and parcel to our relationship.

He later stated that:

In a general way, death is not a fearful thing to me, It feels very intimate, and having the experience of being able to be with Annie in her last months, years, moments, I mean it sounds odd to say, but it feels something of a gift to be with someone in that intimate of a situation.

Adam's grief was as deep as Esteban's, but the circumstances of the death led them to have different experiences in relation to the death of a spouse.

#### Length of Time Since Death

A final factor which influences the psychological experience of grief is when the person died. In general, the participants described a grief response that fluctuated in relation to the phase of the grief experience. For example, the participants coped differently prior to the person's death (if the person was terminally ill), than at the moment of death, or during the early years of bereavement. Additionally, the manifestation of the grief reaction varied considerably between and within individuals, as well as across time, but time always seemed to be a factor, which influenced the bereavement response.

David provides an example of the fluctuation in grief reactions. He commented that prior to his wife's death, he "tried to keep a strong front," yet after his wife died he "consciously tried to stay in (his) grief and work through it." Similarly, Matt describes how his emotional response to his daughter's death changed over time:

When I would first go back to visit Jill's grave, it was a significant emotional experience. But now, there are few tears, if any. I mean it was tough at first, the first few years, but now obviously it doesn't mean nearly as much because the memories are fading away.

### **Mediating Factors**

As with any other psychological experience, grief does not occur within a vacuum, but is subsumed within a broader structural context that can both facilitate and constrain the individual's experience of the phenomenon. The mediating factors which had the strongest impact on these men's experience of grief were: (a) adherence to masculine norms, (b) history of loss, (c) culture (including ethnicity and sexual orientation), (d) financial burden (e) being present at the moment of death, (f) other existing relationships, (g) spirituality, and (h) personal maturation

#### **Adherence to Masculine Norms**

Broadly defined, one's gender is influenced by how strongly one adheres to societal norms regarding gender behavior. In general, these men demonstrated a broad continuum of adherence, rejection, and integration of gender role behavior. Thus, their grief processes also reflected a broad continuum of behavior. Simply stated, the men who felt the most constriction in their lives regarding masculine role also demonstrated the most stereotypic "masculine behaviors" with regard to their entire grief experience. Conversely, men who did not strongly identify with masculine roles described an experience of grief that was more varied. Similarly, men who experienced conflict concerning adherence to gender norms felt compelled to express their grief one way in public situations and another way in private. Thus, a relationship between adherence to masculine role and grief processes was identified.

Esteban is an example of a man who limited his public expression of grief due to his perceived masculine role. His wife died in an accident 10 years ago, yet he commented that until this year, he had never talked to anyone (even his children) about the experience.

He commented:

In Mexico, men are supposed to be macho (laughs). And I think that we tend to hide our feelings. I think I am open in many ways, but in a critical situation like my wife's death, I'm not going to be open. If I meet somebody on the street, or at a party, I might talk about how we met, or what happened, but for sure, I will not be emotional. Even if I have the feeling, I will just change the subject and go away.

David, on the other hand, did not feel constrained in his expression of emotions associated with grief (which is stereotypically regarded as feminine behavior). He commented:

I don't think anything that I did after Kim died was related to my maleness. My perception is that I cried. I cried with friends, and I mean male friends. I really did a lot of intimate connecting with intimate friends, and I really expressed my gratitude for their support.

Despite David's open expression of sadness after his wife's death, he did not feel as free to express his sadness before she died. In fact, prior to Kim's death, David stated that he felt a need to keep a "strong front," which, in many ways, was supported by his wife. For example, he told a story of going to see a psychologist with Kim several months prior to her death. During the therapy session he became emotional and she elbowed him in the stomach, telling him to "buck up." As exemplified, David's overt expression of his feelings varied with context, timing, and gender role expectations. In relation to his wife, he felt pressure to maintain a strong front. Yet, when left to his own resources, he felt more open in his expression of emotion. The relationship between masculinity and gender role will be explored in more depth in section two of the results.

### History of Loss

A second mediating factor was one's previous experience with grief and loss. Several participants commented that this was their "first" experience of negotiating the death of someone close to them. For example, Adam had never experienced the death of a

significant other prior to his wife's death 6 years ago. He commented that "no matter how much sort of intellectual preparation I had done, there was nothing in my experience to prepare me for what this felt like." "It was a kind of pain I didn't know existed until then."

Others had prior experiences with loss, which allowed them a greater frame of reference for their grief experience. For three of the men, prior history of loss had a negative effect on the current grief experience. For example, as a gay man, Eric had experienced multiple deaths of friends and lovers. As a result of these multiple losses, he felt a need to "shut down" and "cut off" parts of the experience as it was too overwhelming to integrate. Similarly, Esteban's father's death was a traumatic experience for him. So when his wife died, it was as if his sorrow and sense of isolation deepened even further.

For three other men, a prior history of loss did not seem to have a strong impact on their direct emotional experience of grief. In general, the participants alluded to the fact that they had not been as deeply attached to the person who died, thus the prior loss did not profoundly impact their current emotional experience. The prior history of loss did, however, influence the way that they thought about death and dying. For example, Carl was raised in a conservative orthodox Jewish tradition. His parents had family members die in the concentration camps during World War II. So, when Carl discussed his mother's death, he talked about the legacy of dying in his family and how death was in many ways familiar to him.

### Culture

Culture is an equally important variable which influences the grief experience. Esteban was raised in Mexico, a culture which celebrates El Dia De Los Muertos - The Day of the Dead. As a young boy, he remembered visiting the graves of his ancestors, which he believed helped him be less afraid of his own mortality. Subsequently, he wonders how his own children coped with the death of their mother in the absence of those rituals. He commented:

Death is more natural in my culture than I feel it is here. I know my kids hear of gangs and the killings they read about in the paper, but I don't know

if it has the same effect on the individual as when we grew up accepting death, because of the celebration and the way we dealt with it.

Similarly, Eric describes the impact of living in the gay culture prior to the treatment options now available for those with HIV status. He commented:

I don't know if you have talked to any other gay men, because its not your typical grief process....I don't think there are many straight men who have that sort of repeated crashing, you know - it's a different process. Something so intimately connected to what you are; your behavior and your intimacies with other persons. So that seems like almost a whole study in itself!

### Financial Burden

Finances are another social factor which can dramatically impact the time and energy which one has to put into more personal aspects of grieving. Nate's mother died when he was 10 years old, after a prolonged bout with cancer. In describing how he and his family coped after his mother died he stated:

It wasn't the grief, it was the effect of it. You know, we didn't have any money. My dad couldn't find another job, so every day I was wondering what was going to happen. That's what I remember. I remember missing my mom. I remember going to school and being sad. I remember feeling different from the other kids. But, the thing that was at the forefront was that we had no money as a result of her dying.

### Being Present at the Moment of Death

Another variable that influenced the nature of the grief experience was physical proximity to the person when they were dying. All four of the men who were present at the moment the person died found that experience to be helpful as it deepened their emotional experience. Eric described the moment of his mother's death as being "an epiphany:"

I don't have any idea what a state of grace is, but I feel I've been as close to a state of grace or as close to an epiphany as you can be. I mean I just felt so absolutely privileged. And my mother in her death stunned me....I had no idea what it would be like, but having been there, I think it made the whole grief process something. I think it transformed it. I don't know what I would be doing or feeling if she had died while I was in the air over Nevada or something.

Carl offers a similar description of the day his mother died:

That is one of the few days of my life that's just "there" in so many ways. I have lots of other great events in my life, but very few of them have that overall clarity that day does. But, while I was in the middle of it, it seemed fairly surreal. I was happy, but I was not detached – I was very emotional. Mostly, I just trusted everybody who was there.

Three of the five men who were not able to be with the person when they died expressed feelings of envy, guilt, frustration, or simply the loss of an opportunity to share an intimate moment with the deceased. For example, Matt's daughter lived in a different state when she was dying. He commented:

Well, I'm very envious of her mother who was there. I mean it was terrible for her to be there, to watch her daughter just fail all those tests, and ultimately die. But she got to be with Jill when she died. So, I'm envious I couldn't be a part of that. So, I had to use phone calls. I had to use visits, you know, whatever I could. You do as good as you can, but it wasn't like being there.

#### Other Existing Relationships

The presence of other close relationships helped to either facilitate or constrain the person's grieving process. Some relationships made the grieving process more complicated. For example, Carl was determined to maintain his relationship with his girlfriend after his mother died. Yet, his attempt to focus on his romantic attachment worked against him as he did not allow himself to grieve for his mother until the relationship with his girlfriend ended. Similarly, Adam commented that prior to his wife's death, there was a period of conflict with one of his daughters, as well as with a close friend. He resolved those conflicts, but acknowledged that they required a lot of emotional energy at the time they occurred.

At other times, a significant relationship can help a person make sense of, or move forward with, their grief experience. David commented that after his wife died, he thought he would never enter another romantic relationship. Yet, the day that he made that pact with himself, he encountered a woman that he currently describes as his "soul-mate." Thus, for David, another relationship facilitated his healing. For others, those relationships seemed to make the grieving process more complicated.

### Spirituality

One's spiritual practice, as well as a belief in life after death, can profoundly influence the way one attempts to manage or handle their experience with grief. The most poignant example of this was provided by Andrew, a graduate student in psychology. About the same time that his father died, Andrew had a spontaneous mystical experience that immediately transformed his perspective on death and dying. In fact, he experienced this transformation so profoundly that he felt called upon to work with the dying. Subsequently, he began to work as a chaplain for the local hospital, and enrolled in a graduate program in transpersonal psychology. Thus, for Andrew, the experience of his father's death was almost superseded by his recent awareness of the metaphysical issues involving death.

Peter, a self-professed Buddhist, found solace in spiritual rituals after his son died. Based on his beliefs, he designed a Buddhist funeral to facilitate the release of his son's spirit from its human state. He explained:

The Buddhist funeral is about trying to have as peaceful and caring an atmosphere as possible so that the spirit can leave the body. The body is not a human being anymore. It's going to be ashes in a few days, but there is another process going on. There can not be matter without something, and the Buddhists believe that the spirit can be held back by habits and longings and hunger and all kinds of things that are habitual. So, you have to create a ritual atmospheres so all those longings can be released.

### Personal Maturation

A final intervening variable that impacted the way participants choose to cope with loss was personal maturation. Specifically, the participants who more comfortable with themselves, more self-aware, and less constrained by external expectations of others and of society, engaged more freely in their grief experience. Although, none of the men directly commented on this fact, it seemed evident in their interviews. For example, when asked if he would have coped differently with the death of his wife at an earlier age, Adam responded:

I would have and not as well. I would have been much more in crisis personally. I was a pretty insecure young man in many ways, and the

insecurity often came out in being afraid. And, as you well know, being afraid is almost the worst posture from which to do anything, make decisions, be helpful to other people, all of those things. So, I would have been much more afraid, and I would have been even less able to share with other people.

Thus, to use Adam's words, the interaction of the above mediating factors (e.g. adherence to gender role, history of loss, personal maturation, etc.) created a context, which then influenced the "posture" from which these men attempted to manage their grief experience.

### **Coping Strategies**

In relation to grief, the participants in the study used numerous strategies to manage and respond to the feelings they were experiencing as a direct consequence of their loss. Thus, the specific strategies were usually an attempt to manage affect. The emotions may or may not have been manifested outwardly, but were present and influenced subsequent behavior. As mentioned previously, the most frequently mentioned feeling states were shock, pain, sadness, confusion, isolation, anger, blame and relief. The presence and intensity of these affective states fluctuated within and between participants.

Fourteen primary coping strategies emerged as ways to manage the feeling states associated with bereavement. These strategies were organized into four major categories: (a) setting aside the grief response, (b) instrumental coping, (c) expressive forms of coping, and (d) searching for meaning

#### Setting Aside the Grief Response

Setting aside the grief response was characterized by removing the self, or some part of the self from the experience. The three primary means for setting aside the grief experience were: (a) maintaining silence, (b) intellectualization, and (c) focusing on other activities and relationships. All nine men used one of these strategies at some point in their bereavement experience.

Maintaining Silence One way to set aside the intensity of the grief experience is to keep the story to yourself. Keeping silent about the situation temporarily allows one to

maintain internal control over the reality of the situation. Matt provided an example of this form of coping. He tells a poignant story about his actions the day he discovered that his daughter, Jill, had died.

The day Jill died...I had just come back from a run about 1:30 in the afternoon, and I got a call from Jill's mother that Jill had died....I couldn't get a hold of Megan, my wife, so I just took off and walked. Megan and I were going to go to a play that night with some friends...I chose not to tell her or the friends that Jill had died. We went all the way through the play and when we got home I told her...And she basically looked at me and said, 'How could you keep that inside you all this time!' ....But, to me, I was with my wife and two close friends. I was perfectly comfortable. I didn't particularly enjoy the play, but I didn't want to spoil their evening, and I got my needs satisfied when I got home. To me, it was o.k., but boy was I surprised at the criticism from Megan. I'm not quite sure I understand that yet!

Intellectualization Intellectualization was the process of observing and analyzing the grief experience as opposed to directly participating in it. After his mother died, Eric commented on his tendency to watch his grief response.

I'm a psychologist, so I'm thinking to myself, Oh – look at that response. That's a good grief response! We learned about that in the textbook. So, for me, instead of going through the grief process and experiencing it in an unadulterated manner, I go through the grief process and experience it as watching myself go through the grief process....And I think a lot of watching myself go through the grief process is a defensive type of thing to do, to distance myself from the experience.

Focusing on Other Activities and Relationships This was probably the most widely employed coping strategy among this group of participants. In general, this strategy included focusing on work or other relationships in order to maintain emotional equilibrium and normalize the situation. Andrew described the process of focusing on work after experiencing a different form of loss, a divorce from his first wife:

For me, there seems to be a setting aside, doing the emotional part of grieving in private. And in the setting aside is the doing. For example, I used to live in the mountains. My wife, at the time, moved up there, and I started seeing how she drove the mountain roads and I thought, 'she's gonna drive off the edge one day!' So, I was sort of mentally preparing myself for that possibility...And at some point, I asked myself what would I do if in fact she did die, she killed herself, and I thought, well, I'd probably put myself into my work. Well, in fact when we divorced, a loss, I really put myself into my work. And I've seen that pattern over and over....Um, I sort of like the notion of it as trying to hang on to identity. You know, someone's been very close and they go away, that piece of the

identity goes away, so where do you find you? I guess you could describe it as a grasping onto wholeness, sort of diving into some other part of identity.

For two of the men, setting aside the grief response involved forming new relationships and/or sexual attachments. Adam commented how sex played a functional, yet conflicting role for him after his wife's death:

Um, one thing that is hard for me to talk about, but that I think is probably relevant, is that after Annie had chemotherapy, the effect on her system was pretty major. It affected her entire being. It affected the way she smelled, the way she looked, and it affected her libido. And so for us, there was virtually no sex as we had known it for over a year after the chemotherapy. And that was an issue for me. It was not one that we talked about a lot, primarily because in spite of that, in spite of everything, Annie had the capacity to be loving and affectionate. And so, from the point of view of getting love from her, I certainly got that, but my sex life was pretty much at an end.

I know my daughter felt that I started seeing women after Annie died much too soon. Frankly, I started seeing women because I didn't know whether or not that part of me was still alive and I needed to find out. And it didn't mean that I wasn't grieving. It had nothing to do with that, nor did it have anything to do with feeling like Annie could be easily replaced. That wasn't true either. But, none-the-less, it was an issue.

In sum, setting aside the grief reaction was usually characterized by a desire to function in face of adversity. This coping strategy emphasizes self-reliance and focusing on other areas of one's life. The next type of coping strategy, instrumental coping, also focuses on functioning in the face of adversity, but it provided a mechanism for interacting more directly with the death.

### Instrumental Coping

This coping strategy was focused on action, agency and functioning in response to loss. One way to cope with death is to take charge of the pragmatic aspects of the situation. For example, there is a need for someone to make plans, get information, deal with finances and tend to family members. All nine of the men engaged in some form of instrumental coping in response to bereavement. Two primary behaviors included in this form of coping were: (a) addressing the pragmatic aspects of the loss, and (b) taking care of others.

Addressing Pragmatic Aspects of the Loss Addressing pragmatic aspects of the loss involved activities such as making plans and/or gathering information about what needed to be done. These activities included meeting with doctors, funeral directors, lawyers, and others who were directly involved in the death and dying process. For example, during his daughter's illness, Matt met with lawyers to determine whether one of his other children was a viable donor for a bone marrow transplant. Similarly, in response to his distress, David assisted his wife in her quest to gather information about the latest treatment for breast cancer. Andrew helped his mother move into an assisted living facility after his father died. Esteban's family was left with a huge debt from the family business after his father died. Thus, the first few years after his father died, Esteban commented that he had no time to grieve, as he worried about how to support his family and pay the enormous debt accrued by the family business.

In addition to the necessity of having someone cope with the pragmatic aspects of the death, the ability to take action in the face of adversity seemed to provide solace for participants. Peter commented on how taking charge of his son's funeral arrangement gave him a sense satisfaction:

We got all the details together. I placed a lot of pictures of him in the coffin . I also created a shrine. It felt so satisfying to be in charge of this thing. I mean – this was OUR boy, this is OUR funeral. We didn't want the funeral director to do anything for us, except to give us a building and a container. We didn't want anyone else getting involved in how we should do things. So it felt so satisfying that we could do that.

For other men, making decisions was necessary, but traumatic. For example, after his wife's accident, Esteban had to decide whether to keep her on life support. He also had to respond to his children's concerns. He described the situation in the following way:

So, at the time, my father-in-law and I decided she shouldn't stay on life support. I talked to my kids, and my daughter didn't like the idea...but that was the decision. We wanted to let her go. And then it was difficult because my wife wanted to donate her organs. And we did, but that was very hard for my daughter. It was hard for me too, but it is what she wanted to do, so we did it.

Taking Care of Others Another form of taking action during a loss is to take care of others. Two of the men, Adam and David, were the primary caretakers of their spouses during a terminal illness. Similarly, two of the men became primary caretakers for their children after a spouse died. David likens his caretaking behavior to being the Captain of a ship. He offered a story describing the metaphor of being a Captain for his wife:

Prior to her death, generally speaking, I kept a strong front, and consciously, intentionally stayed in denial. I was actually pretty affected by a book (Adrift) I read at the time, which was totally unrelated, about a fellow who was soloing a sailboat across the Atlantic. Anyway, he woke up in the middle of the night, to a loud thought that his sailboat was sinking around his ankles. He managed to get his life raft out and managed to survive close to 80 days adrift in this raft.

While adrift, he talked about the battle that went on, which was primarily up here (points to head), between the captain and the crew. The captain wanted to say, "we're going to make it." "We're going to ration the food and we're going to ration the water, and by God, we're going to make it." The crew, on the other hand, all wanted to eat the food and drink the water because they were hungry and thirsty, and/or they wanted to slip in to the water with the fish and give up. So, I very consciously tried to stay the captain for Kim, you know, I felt like if I crumbled, I certainly wouldn't be a positive force for her. That was my belief.

Yet he also commented that it was easier to take care of her than it was to accept the reality of her death. David described the paradox of the situation:

I felt damn good about all the things I did to try and help her through that period, in terms of her trying to live. In retrospect, I recognize that I didn't do a very good job of helping her die. In the same breath, I don't know if she would have let me go there anyway.....I kind of let her guide me, in terms of the dying process, but there were a couple of occasions where I think she was trying to walk through that door with me. And, maybe I didn't go as far as I could have with her (big sigh).

Adam stated that he learned a lot about himself in the care taking process.

Specifically, he commented that he could give a great deal without being dependent on the act of giving:

I had to learn that taking care of Annie was a matter of just doing that. Of just taking care of the things that needed to be taken care of, that she was no less able to make decisions and choices of her own, which may differ from mine. That she was no less autonomous as a person than she was before...And so I was very aware of the line that needed to be walked between being a caretaker for someone who needed to be taken care of and not buying into that as my persona....I needed to separate those things. Very clearly, taking care of her was something I was doing because I loved

her and because I wanted to do that, but I was not dependent on taking care of her.

In sum, instrumental coping can be thought of as an active form of coping. This form of coping is related to the process of "setting aside the grief experience" in that there is a focus on functioning in adverse situations. These two coping strategies are similar in that they allow one to move through the day-to-day aspects of living. Instrumental coping is different from setting aside, however, in that it provided participants with the opportunity to respond directly to overwhelming feelings, as opposed to pushing them aside. As will be illustrated next, most participants felt more comfortable expressing their emotions in conjunction with some sort of action, as opposed to expressing emotions via sharing with others.

### Expressive Coping

An alternative to actively responding to a loss was to sit with and experience one's emotions. While perhaps less visible, this form of expressive coping was an integral part of all nine of these men's grief experience. The six primary ways that these men directly experienced their emotions were by: (a) expressing emotions while moving, (b) expressing emotions in private, (c) using ritual, (d) remembering the deceased, (e) consciously staying with grief, and (f) seeking social support.

Expressing Emotions While Moving The majority of participants alluded to the fact that one of the things that helped them both feel and express themselves was actually moving (e.g. walking, driving, traveling, switching jobs, literally moving to change the context of the situation). The experience of needing to "move" was most tangibly reflected by Carl's experience after his mother died. Immediately after her death, Carl commented that he "didn't cope at all." He stated, "I repressed, and then became classically depressed." After this experience of depression, he described a "breakthrough" when he decided to take three months off of his job and travel to Australia and New Zealand. He described his wanderlust in the following way:

So that was probably the pivotal period for me to actually grieve, be comfortable grieving, and just be allowed to grieve. And, some of it is gone, a lot of it is gone. I mean, I will always have this little thing that says, it's ridiculous that she's gone, you know. Why was it her, and all of that, but it doesn't overwhelm me like it did for a while.....So, unstructured time and space was helpful. But you know what I think was also pivotal for me was being in those surroundings and being challenged – and thinking about where I'm going to sleep that night, and thinking what the hell do I want to eat for dinner.

Peter described an experience of needing to scream and wail after his son died. Yet this process unfolded as he was walking. He woke up early in the morning and was rummaging through the cab of his son's truck and found a CD that they used to listen to together. He described his reaction to that find:

So anyways, I took that Bob Marley CD and I put it in my backpack and I just started walking. And I knew I was going to walk to the funeral parlor, which was three miles away. And it was still only 6:00 in the morning. And I found myself walking through the streets calling his name. I couldn't believe that. I thought, God, if anybody sees me, they'll think I'm crazy. But I was calling his name, out loud! Pretty loud., as if I was calling him. But I knew what I was doing. I knew that I was calling him – and I knew that he wasn't there. And I knew that it was o.k. that I was calling him if that is what I felt like doing! I don't care how weird it looked, that's what I needed to be doing. So, I was calling his name....and every time I did it, I felt better and better. I could hardly even see, I was crying so hard, But I knew that it was o.k. to be doing this.

Expressing Emotions in Private Five of the men described a desire to do much of their emotional work surrounding grief in private. This desire for privacy appeared to stem from two sources. One reason for desiring privacy was related to a discomfort at expressing certain emotions (particularly sadness) in front of others. Secondly, the desire for privacy appeared to be motivated by a belief that emotions are a "personal experience" and need not be shared with others. Andrew discussed the private nature of his grief. Interestingly, the private space that he chose to grieve was his car – - another place where movement occurs.

I tend to do it quite alone - while I'm driving, or while I'm home alone. If I get a real spasm of grief and it really overwhelms me, I'm quite willing to go into those and really sob....I'm better at having tears in public than I used to be, but I still tend to be sort of private. I'm much more willing to share my laughter than to share my tears. And I think all of this is this dissonance between that image of what men are supposed to be like, strong, hold it together, get the things done that have to be done in the face of the

difficulty, versus what actually does come up. So, I've had good training, good training.

Nate described his conflict about becoming emotional in public:

The emotional part; I wanted to do it and I didn't want to do it. I didn't want to cry in front of somebody. And at the time, I'm sure I would have been uncomfortable if somebody had talked to me...But you know what, then again, I think deep down, I would have wanted someone to get at the emotions, someone who can crack my shell. That would have been nice. But I was scared about it. I didn't know what would happen if I did that. I didn't open up. I didn't let there be an occasion for that to happen. So, the part that felt more comfortable and knew how to deal with it is what showed.

Using Ritual Rituals included both formal and informal rituals. Formal rituals in response to death included conducting ceremonies, attending funerals and visiting grave sites. Less formal rituals included actions such as creating a shrine for the deceased or visiting accident sites. The ritual of visiting graves and accident sites seemed to facilitate both remembering and integration of the emotional aspects of the death. This ritual was mentioned frequently by four of the men. Despite his discomfort with cemetery's and funerals, Matt described the usefulness of visitation rituals.

A few times when I was younger, I had to go to funerals, and it was terribly stressful for me. But, my attitudes have changed somewhat. I still don't like to go to funerals. I don't like to view dead people. But, I have become somewhat of a cemetery visitor because I have a reason to go. Even before Jill died, I started going to the cemetery with my great Aunt. We went to rediscover where mom and pop were buried. So, I took pictures and kind of documented the cemetery. Then, after Jill died, I would visit her grave pretty consistently. I can cope a lot better. As a matter-a-fact, I now like to be part of the memorializing of somebody who died. I don't like to view dead bodies, but I think the celebrating of somebody's life is beneficial.

Similarly, in his attempt to understand the death of his son, Peter went to the site where his son died while climbing and subsequently falling off a bridge. The spontaneous gathering of friends, as well as the re-enacting his son's last actions, seemed to ritualize the moment of his son's death.

We were getting ready to take his body to the crematorium, and all of his friends came...So, I was inviting them that night, after we got back from cremating his body to gather in his room. Twenty-five kids showed up. Amazing. And we just sat there and told stories of Jacob. I also made an arrangement with his friends to drive me immediately after the cremation to the bridge where he died. I hadn't

seen it yet. They were all willing to do that...So the boy (who was with Jacob when he died) was with me, and then these two other close friends got in the car and we drove together...My wife was so upset...but I wanted to go see this bridge and I knew this was going to be the most opportune moment because that's how I felt....So we went there and I climbed the bridge and we stayed there. It was pretty amazing. I even dove off the bridge three times. Not up high, but off the road where the kids do...

Remembering the Deceased Remembering the deceased involved both conscious and unconscious attempts to remember and memorialize the person. Nate described the process of both remembering and learning about his mother:

Well, I remember, about five years ago, my father decided he wanted to get a scrap book together of pictures of all the family members. So, we did that together which was really nice...but it was hard on him, but is the kind of thing that was nice because we finally talked about it....Then, about three years ago I decided I really wanted to get to know my mom because I never really knew her that well, so I went around asking him, asking my sister and my family about her. You know, what she was like and ever since then it seem like there has been much more of an open dialogue about it; we can talk about it.

A second form of remembering the deceased came in the unconscious form of dreams. Four men commented that they had frequent dreams and/or "visitations" by the deceased in dreams both immediately and for years after the person died. For Eric, the dreams provided some comfort and connection. He stated:

I get visits often from my mom in dreams. I still get visits by my grandmother who died in 1981. We're talking 18 years ago. She still comes into my dreams occasionally and has something interesting to say! So, I don't believe in life after death or anything. I'm not a religious person. But I do like those visitations because they remind me of my connections with those two women.

Esteban had dreams of both his wife and his father. But, for him, the dreams were more unsettling. He commented on his confusion about the meaning of a dream he had about his father in the following way:

I had a dream for a while that he was coming and I asked him to help me, but he was mad at me and did not want to help me. And it was a dream that lasted for five years. I didn't have it every night, but it came to me every so often. So, I don't know what my mind was thinking. It was hard to lose him, because we loved him. It was a great loss.

Thus, it seemed that dreams provided another avenue for integrating some of the emotional aspects of the loss.

Consciously Staying With Grief A couple of the men commented that they “consciously stayed with their grief,” after a loved one died. For example, the year after his wife died, David took time off work, journaled, spent time alone, read books, rented movies, and went to support groups. Similarly, Eric commented on the process of letting himself have feelings of anger, sadness and loss in response to his mother’s death:

For the first year or so, I would occasionally get really lachrymose. I would read something in a book or see something on TV that would really key into those emotions, and I would realize that there is a big hole there. And even right now, as I speak, I get really teary about it --it’s just this overwhelming feeling of sadness. I mean the anger at the medical profession for the way they treated her, that’s just there all the time. It doesn’t matter. But, the overwhelming feeling of loss. I lost a parent and that makes me different. It changes my life. I don’t try to suppress those feelings. In fact, I might be a little worried if I didn’t have these moments...It would suggest to me that I’ve detached from it in some way.

Seeking Support from Others Despite some professed conflict over expressing themselves in public, all nine men had at least one confidant with whom they could share their loss. For example, Peter stayed with a female friend for several months after his son died. Similarly, Nate was able to talk to his sister. Esteban formed a friendship with a family that lived close to him, and has recently begun to talk to them about his experience. Thus, most found at least one person that they could share their experience with, even if they did not consciously process their grief with them.

Most of the participants seemed very selective as to whom they chose to confide in. Their selectivity seemed based on two factors: (a) a difficulty in asking for help, and (b) a sense that no one would understand them anyway. Adam describes his sense of futility with regard to speaking with others:

Talking about it was what I wanted to do most. And yet, often, people were uncomfortable. They were afraid that if I talked about it, it would make me sadder. They thought their goal should be to make me feel better. And I really didn’t feel like I had the need for people to make me feel better. I can remember one of the things that made me most upset would be when people would say, well, you and Annie had such a wonderful thing together. – it

must be wonderful to have a memory like that. I wanted to punch them out. Who the hell wants the memory when you're missing the person (sigh).

Four participants sought the professional assistance of a counselor, victim advocate or support group. The men who attended support groups stated that they were primarily helpful for gaining information. One participant also commented that it was more helpful to participate in a group where other people were having similar experiences (as opposed to a male support group). Generally, it seemed that professional help was used predominately as a means to normalize the grief process and to provide a personal reference point as to how they were coping. Only one of the four men who utilized professional services commented that it was useful with regard to the emotional exploration of his experience.

As an aside, it was interesting that the participants seemed to find more comfort in giving help than receiving it. In fact, social support was mentioned more frequently as something that they provided for others. This aspect of coping may be related to a tendency to take care of others (as mentioned in instrumental coping) or a discomfort in asking for assistance.

### Searching For Meaning

Ultimately, in the alternation between doing and feeling, some participants were able to find some meaning in the death of the significant other. This trend was not universally experienced, as some could not find any meaning in their loss. But for those who could, meaning seemed to emerge via three distinct processes: (a) reflecting on the meaning of life and death, (b) giving back to the community, and (c) focusing on the universality of grief.

Reflecting On the Meaning of Life and Death Several participants explained how experiencing the death of a loved one increased their awareness of their own mortality and subsequently enhanced their quality of life. Specifically, two of the participants who lost spouses commented that they were more likely to be present focused and live in the moment, as opposed to hoping for something better in the future. David described this process:

I am a very different person than I was in 1992....I mean intellectually, just knowing that I am mortal. Essentially, it brought me more into the present, and galvanized...what's really important and what's really not...So, I'm spending a lot more time with the people I love than with my career these days.

Andrew's reflection about the meaning of his father's death was influenced by a metaphysical experience. Near the time of his father's death, Andrew had a "spontaneous mystical experience" that deeply affected his interpretation of the world. Afterwards, he experienced a call to work with the dying as a chaplain in a hospital. Thus, Andrew's understanding of the meaning related to his father's death was only a small part of his quest to understand the relationship between physical body and physical life and the metaphysical aspects of being. When reflecting on the concept of death, Andrew perceived death as just another form of loss. He stated:

I'm not sure I differentiate death and loss very well, or that they need to be different.....The hospital is all about loss. People walk in the door, they lose their clothes, they lose their dignity, they lose their privacy, they lose they body parts....just loss, loss, loss...And I guess that has sort of led me to look at any change as having its grief and loss and we choose to call death a particular kind of grief...I really have to wonder if this is such a big issue in this country because we deny death -- we hide it -- we don't want to talk about it. When in an ordinary conversation does anybody talk about mortality, particularly their own? It's just so repressed.

Giving Back to the Community A second way that participants could make sense of their loss was by sharing their experience with others. Interestingly, seven of the nine men who participated in the study commented that part of the reason they were doing so was that they hoped that their story might provide some solace for other men.

Another way to give back to the community was starting a support group or a foundation. Three of the men are either facilitating a support group or are doing some public speaking about their experience. One participant, David, started a non-profit foundation in honor of his wife. He commented on the meaning of this experience in the following way:

Well, starting the resource center helped in a couple of ways. One, it honored her because she was a very smart woman. She was probably as engaged as I can imagine anyone being in terms of her cancer therapy and how she wanted to deal with those kinds of things. So, it was kind of holding that forth for the community and other women that wanted to follow with that kind of approach. It was kind of honoring her and who she was and how courageously she dealt with her cancer. Second, it also felt good to give something back to the community because it felt like the community was there for me, and it felt good that potentially that if this helped even one woman through the process, whether she survived or not, then it was worth it.

An additional, albeit less direct, means of giving back to the community was via a shift in careers. Eight of the nine men either took time off from work, or started a new career path after their experience with bereavement. Adam left academia and began operating a dairy, a career that he and his wife Annie had dreamed of together. Andrew left a 30 year career and started graduate school in transpersonal psychology. Eric took a job in Australia. Matt left a job in corporate finance to get into non-profit management. Carl and David cut back on their hours at work. Peter left a career in engineering to work as an entrepreneur. Nate entered graduate school in psychology. Thus, these changes reflected a change in values, which ultimately are relayed back to the community in the form of work and or time spent with significant others.

Focusing on the Universal Aspects of Grief For the two men who lost children, finding meaning was much more difficult, but this process seemed to be facilitated by realizing that they were not alone in their experience. Peter, described how ritual helped him shift his perspective away from his own grief to the communal aspects of the experience.

I started to realize that this grieving process is not something I can get my mind around. In other words, it was bigger than anything my mind could get around....Not only that but I also knew I was not alone. How many people in how many villages over how many centuries had gone through the experience that I was going through? I began to get a universal sense of what I was going through was not mine alone. So that was the next step, and I thought to myself, what did these people do? How did they cope with this? I bet they had rituals for this.

Peter then describes the ritual he created. After describing the ritual, he commented:

Like Stephen Levine says, “my grief is transformed into our grief.” That was very, very helpful. Now, when I go to these bereaved parents groups, - I see people are stuck in “my grief.” They haven’t transformed into “The Grief.” The universality of the experience. So, for me, the ritual helped cement the universality aspect. And that was the most healing part, to realize that. Whether we had the ritual or not, the realization of the universality, and to share it and embody it by having other people there...So that’s how movement out of my personal loss was then embraced by a larger picture. Instead of just my story, there is a larger story.

A second way to understand one’s experience is to compare the severity or intensity to the experience of others. Thus, despite the loss of his daughter, Matt seemed to find some solace in realizing that his daughter’s death, while it was horrible, was not as tragic as the grief experienced by others. He commented that a close friend’s daughter had committed suicide, and compared his experience to hers. He stated:

But, hers’ was you know, super terrible. I’ve experienced two close friends, who have had a child commit suicide. I can’t imagine that. I mean Jill was bad enough, but I can’t imagine the tremendous impact a suicide would have.

### **Consequences of Coping Styles**

The consequences of using different coping strategies varied within and between participants. Thus, the consequences should not be viewed as endpoints to the grief experience. Rather, they are part of the cyclical pattern of grief. However, despite the cyclical nature of grief, certain consequences did seem to emerge as a direct result of the coping strategy which was being used. For these participants, the primary consequences of the chosen coping styles were: (a) further isolation and depression (b) a shift in perspective, and (c) acceptance.

#### **Further Isolation, Depression or Confusion**

Most participants experienced depression, and confusion at some point in their bereavement; yet several experienced a prolonged period of depression. Depression and isolation were experienced primarily by men who appeared to repress and rationalize their emotions; or who felt the effect of grief but did not openly share their experience with others. For example, Esteban did not talk to anyone (even his children) about the effect his wife’s death had on him for eight or nine years. In fact, he has only recently begun to give

voice to his experience. His isolation after the loss was compounded by the fact that he was a Latino man living in the United States. Thus, in addition to losing his wife, he was alienated from the rituals and family support he had experienced during earlier losses in his life. As a result, Esteban initially grieved alone.

Carl commented for that for the year after his mother died, he “repressed his feelings,” and “became classically depressed.” Thus, the consequence of his initial chosen coping mechanism (setting aside) resulted in depression. However, in response to his depression, he chose to cope differently and took time out from work to “have unstructured time to grieve.” During that time, he traveled, “let his feelings filter through him,” and ultimately felt “the clutter lift from his heart and his mind.” Subsequently his mood shifted from depression to confusion, and ultimately acceptance. Thus, in response to his grief, Carl used different coping strategies at different phases of the grief process, with each response producing a different consequence.

#### A Shift in Perspective

After the death of a significant other, most participants experienced a shift in perspective, either in the way they viewed themselves or in the way they viewed the person who died. The shift in the way participants viewed themselves included a feeling of being different in the world. For example, after Peter’s son died, he acknowledged that he now had a new identity, he was a “parent who had lost a child.” Eric acknowledged a similar identity shift after his mother died, that he was someone who had lost a parent.

A second shift in perspective manifested in a new understanding of the deceased and the participant’s relationship with the deceased. For Carl, the death of his mother was coupled with a new sense of autonomy as an adult. This transformation began before his mother died, as they were able to talk to one another about some of the conflicts in their relationship. These conversations

seemed to help Carl leave behind some childhood beliefs that he had about himself.

He commented:

There were some beautiful things about the way my mom died. And I think those have definitely given me something to put in the empty holes sometimes. Like the conversations....we had a chance to make peace, and to share more.....She tried to apologize for ignoring me, but at the same time for being demanding and having high expectations. And I spend most of the time trying to tell her I loved her.

Nate's experience was different from Carl's in that he never really knew his mother. Thus, part of his grief process involved learning more about her. He described how this shift in perspective occurred for him:

I don't have a mom. I don't have one. I don't have one. That's kind of the mind set I was in for a long time. I don't have a mom. I never really had a mom. She died when I was ten....A few years ago, when I started to go through the process (of asking family members about her), I realized, you know, I do have a mom, it's just that she died when I was young, and it doesn't mean I didn't have one. So, it was kind of a mind shift, sort of seeing it from a different perspective. I think that occurs later on in grief, but I now see from a different perspective that I do have a mom.

At times, the shift in perspective was coupled with an increase in self-awareness. This increased awareness included a deeper understanding of self and emotions, of self in relationships, and specifically of the relationship with the deceased. Carl demonstrated a change in self-perception as he commented on what he learned from the process of having his mother die while he was in his early 30's.

If the generic circumstances were the same now, and I was in a relationship that I really wanted....I would probably ask my partner if she wanted to help me out a little bit. God only knows what that would mean, but probably it would mean asking for quiet time.....and, I think one of the huge lessons learned is that many of the events of the day that you think are important are not. And, I waste too much time on mundane crap....I guess the problem with all this is that I wish I didn't have to learn to be without my mom that way, because it's not going to happen again.

Nate discussed the impact of his mother's death on his perception of the world.

Well, there's been good things and bad things. I've learned that things will work out one way or another and you need to have fun while you are here. I've also learned to laugh a lot. But, I've always had the struggle of wanting stability in my life, to have things settled. But, in the back of my mind, I'm aware that things may not work out the way that I plan.

### Reconciliation and/or Acceptance

Some participants seemed to have achieved greater acceptance and reconciliation in relation to their grief experience than others. David commented on his current level of acceptance of his wife's early death.

I suppose if there is a blessing in all this, if there's a gift in it, its recognizing what's really important to me and living more along those lines....I think it has something to do with a kind of acceptance. That well, really, this is life. This is the deal. And as sad as it is, and as unfortunate and unfair as one might like to think that a woman dying at the age of 45 is, it happens all the damn time. And it could happen to you and it could happen to me.

Peter commented on his process of coming to terms with his son's death:

I went to a bereaved parents group, and I was hearing people say they are depressed....I don't feel any of these things. I feel complete. And I don't have to make up stories. I mean this one lady wrote a book called, "Standing By My Side," and the back explains the title. She said, 'I kept asking, where is my child? And I finally got the answer, he stands by my side.' Well, I mean people can make up anything they want, but my child is not standing by my side, my child is dead. That's it. He's not here, and I don't need any fabrications like that. I'm not saying that that couldn't be helpful for other people, but for me....I want the raw, naked truth. And if it is a strong drink, then that's what it is. So, I'm o.k. with that. And not only am I o.k. with that, but I celebrate that now, because I feel complete and satisfied. And I'm not depressed. I'm not fragmented. It's not that I don't feel sad. I mean you just saw me cry. I just feel complete....I know my son is gone. He is missing, but nothing's missing in terms of the process of grieving.

To summarize, the consequences of chosen grieving styles were not unilateral. That is, the participants did not use just one coping modality and they did not have one grief outcome. As was identified in this study, grief is a dynamic process. Feeling states fluctuate over time and in response to changes in social structure and individual growth. The dynamic nature of grief will be explored in more depth in the third section of the results which provides a detailed model of male bereavement.

## Section II: Masculinity and its Relationship to Bereavement

Much emphasis has been placed recently on the differences between “masculine grief” and “feminine” grief. In the introduction, the author speculated that “masculine” and “feminine” grieving styles are not be related to biological sex, but are related to the social construction of gender. Thus, the second part of this data analysis explored how these nine men conceptualized masculinity, and identified whether there was a link between their conceptualization of masculinity and the coping strategies used in their grief process.

### Descriptions of Masculinity

The data from this section of the interviews initially produced 90 open codes, which were consolidated into four global categories. No one category fully explained one man’s experience of masculinity and masculine role. In fact, the individual language that participants used to talk about masculinity usually fell into at least two of the four categories. Despite the overlap of themes, the categories were created to give structure to the participant’s responses. The four ways in which these men described their views of masculinity were: (a) adherence to stereotypical notions of masculinity, (b) being in conflict with societal definitions of masculinity, (c) rejecting cultural notions of masculinity, and (d) transcending traditional masculine role. The following paragraphs describe these categories and explain how they were related to grief.

#### Adherence to Stereotypical Notions of Masculinity.

Several of the participants tended to define masculinity with regard to the biological difference between men and women. They described being a man in terms of “not being a woman.” Similarly, they alluded to the biological differences between men and women, believing that the personality characteristics of men and women are biologically derived, as opposed to being learned. Comments reflecting this orientation included the following:

I think there is a natural difference between men and women. I mean I remember playing sports as a kid. We would argue and fight, and then keep playing. But, my sisters, they would get hurt and go away. They didn’t want to participate.....And I thought about this with my own kids. My

daughter liked to play house and dolls, and my son wanted to play with guns, so I think it is natural.

Or

I think about gender differences, and I think men are both blessed and cursed by the fact that they are not so driven by their hormones as women. The blessing is that we think we have some control, that in fact, we don't have. The curse is that we haven't learned much about how to release control, both physically and emotionally.

Men who adhered to stereotypical notions of masculinity also tended to define their masculinity by referencing either sexuality or their relationships with women. For example, when he asked how he learned about being a man, one participant commented, "Well, I was just talking to a friend today about the fact that I had no education in the world of sexuality." Similarly, another participant responded to the question about how his masculinity developed by saying:

Oh golly, I don't know. It seemed like as I started to go into high school, I turned into a real introvert and found it extremely difficult to deal with women for several years, even though I had raging hormones. I mean I've had raging hormones all my life. I've always felt the need to connect with women physically and emotionally.

As stated earlier, no one man fit entirely into one of the four categories of masculinity. However, the more a man adhered to stereotypical patterns of masculinity, the more his grieving style tended to reflect that adherence. In general, the men who adhered more strictly to culturally defined definitions of masculinity were more apt to set aside the feelings associated with bereavement, were more isolated in their grief process, and were more apt to be depressed and/or confused in response to the loss. Matt's words represent a stereotypically masculine version of grief: He stated:

My wife has told me that when her father died, she just went to pieces. She got a call that her father had a heart attack and died right there. It was not unexpected because he had high cholesterol. But to have him just keel over and die like that was unexpected. She just totally went to pieces. I mean she fell apart. That's her style. My style is not necessarily to fall apart. It's hard, but why fall apart. I guess I just like to function in life.

Similarly, Esteban compared his grief experience to that of his sisters':

I think it helps to let your emotions out. See, like my sisters and other women. They cry and let go. I don't know if that is the end of it for them or

not. In my case, I guess I feel like a goldfish. I let go in little pieces, a little bit here and a little bit there, like right now. I don't know if that is good or bad, but that's the way it happens for me.

### Being in Conflict with Societal Definitions of Masculinity

The majority of the men interviewed described conflictual feelings about what they have learned about masculinity and were aware of a disjuncture between their personal values and cultural notions of masculinity. Thus, the men fitting into this category usually alluded to the fact that they did not perceive themselves to be a "stereotypical man."

Three of the men, commented that they did not believe they were stereotypical in the sense that they did not identify with "macho" and "aggressive" behaviors. These men did, however, identify with some other notions of masculinity such as being a provider and/or being able to "deal" in moments of crisis. Nate provides insight into this conflict:

I don't want to be a stereotypical emotionally distant breadwinner, but then again, in some ways I am. I'm not the breadwinner. She (his wife) makes all the money (laughs), but you know I would like to be able to, as a man, have a measure of strength that my wife can count on and rely on. Like, I'll be there, you know. I'll do a good job. I'm responsible, dependable. She can count on me and some how that feels different.

Men in this category also had difficulty relating to the question about masculinity. Their response indicated that they did not perceive themselves as traditional men, yet they had not thought too much about what being a man actually means. Or, they identified more strongly with some other role such as their job or as a "brother, husband, or father" as opposed to directly thinking about masculinity *per se*. Carl commented:

Being a man? I would say I don't think I was raised to be a traditional guy. I think I was raised to be myself. That's a hard question....I don't have any idea what it means to be a man! I just know from day one. I was not going to live up to someone's stereotype if I could get a way with it...I mean, I remember I could never see face to face with my dad. I think I was rebelling against the fact that he was virtually impossible to live up to. I think all sons have to deal with that, whether they measure up to their dad.

With regard to men who felt conflicted by masculine role, there seemed to be a yearning to expand their coping repertoire. Thus, while they still felt constrained by masculine role in some contexts (usually a public context), they felt more open to explore

their emotions in other contexts. Nate explored the conflict he had as a boy about sharing some of his feelings:

I never really opened up to anyone about it. It was a very private thing. So, when the grief hit, and all the emotional stuff started going on. I didn't want to open up because I didn't know what to expect. It's confusing in the first place, because no one really talks about those feelings and as a boy, I don't think they probe for that. I didn't want to open up, but at the same time, the emotions were part of who I was. I was emotionally sensitive. So, there were emotions there, but it was just easier for me to push them away because I didn't know what to do with them. So, if somebody, somehow in a safe way, had been able to talk to me about what my feelings were, I think I would have loved it. But, it would have taken me a while to feel o.k. about doing that. I would have been scared.

Carl grappled with the benefits and the drawbacks of the coping strategies which are predominantly associated with traditional masculine role, setting aside and instrumental coping.

Well, one thing I've always done is repress my feelings. Now, whether that is because I'm a man, or because I have my mother's stiff upper lip, I'm not sure. But, it is probably because I am a man. I am the oldest son and the oldest son just has to learn how to take it. You know, get over it. Move on. And, I don't think my dad did anything to disabuse me of that....But, you know, I'm a dealer. I'm probably at my best in a crisis. So, sometimes I wish that somebody else would do it, but I'm really glad that I can rely on myself. I know I can deal...but I guess it is sort of a two-edged sword. At one level, being able to deal is a source of confidence, but at another level, it prevents me from asking for help.

### Rejecting Cultural Notions of Masculinity

Two participants in the study rejected cultural notions of masculinity, and were almost angered by the question of what they thought it meant to be a man. In general, this stance on masculinity was reflected by anger, conscious rejection of roles, and some level of disdain toward other men who bought into cultural notions of masculinity. The rejection of cultural norms of masculinity was reflected in the words of both Peter and Eric. Peter discussed his experience of becoming a man.

The message, if I believed what I saw, was that men are kind of emotionally numb and their duty is to work and pretty much keep their mouth shut about anything that is real for them in terms of what they might feel or experience. ....Um, I developed the opposite of that. I decided that that was sick and I didn't want to become sick, you know, uncomfortable or repressed or limited.....Whereas my mother represented intelligence and language and feeling to me, and I took more to that than what my father was giving off..

So, I would say that I became the opposite of my father and identified more, in that sense, with my mother...and it's not that I wanted to become a woman or anything, its more that I wanted to find out what this other ground was that was so forbidden. Because I felt that that was where my nature really laid. The strong part of me was in that area of intuition, language and understanding, rather than following the rules...I thought that my strength was being denied, actually.

Similarly, Eric stated:

I don't know what masculinity means. Maybe that's what I've come to. I've come to the point where I don't know what its means when they say someone is masculine except what they mean in a superficial way that, these are the traits of a masculine person: competitive, aggressive, whatever....I just think they are tired, old, sad concepts that, at least for me, don't have a hell of a lot of meaning.

The men who rejected masculine role seemed to feel more flexibility with their coping strategies. Eric stated:

I've probably always emotionally volatile. At least somebody who was watching might say, "Boy, Eric is really a mess." And so, I've always been emotionally volatile, which for the male in the family is a little odd. But, I don't think that was ever stifled. I don't think role expectations were ever put on me.

Peter was adamant that his rejection of masculine role allowed his to engage more fully in the grief process and, in his words, "engage in a healthier manner." He stated:

My male role models were not satisfactory and I had to find my own way. So, by having to find my own way in life, that contributed to the way I dealt with grief. In many ways you could say it (masculine role) had a reverse effect on me. Instead of being trapped in the role, in an ineffective, negative role model. The fact that I saw through that gave me the courage to deal with this grief in a healthy way.

One interesting caveat is that in addition to utilizing a wider range of coping strategies in response to grief, the two men who adamantly rejected masculine role expressed more anger and blame in response to the death than the other participants. Thus, one may speculate that anger may aid these men in their separation process, either from a loved one, or from stereotypical expectations of society.

### Transcending Traditional Notions of Masculinity

Two men described a maturational process of both identifying and dis-identifying with masculine role in order to come to some experience of transcending masculine role as

a defining aspect of their identity. It seemed that over the course of time, these men could identify how masculine role had influenced their behavior at certain points in their life, and how it seemed to have played less relevance in other areas. Their introspection allowed a fluidity and awareness about gender and gender role so that it no longer constrained them. Or, if they did feel constrained in any way, due to masculine role, it was recognized and articulated. This was different from the participants who overtly rejected masculine role, because it allowed for an integration of both masculine and feminine aspects of self. The following is an example of the introspection that seemed to lead to some fluidity and transcendence of traditional gender role behavior.

Well, I'm not able to make many comparisons, either with other men, or with how its different to be raised as a man versus raised as a woman....And, I suppose that it is important to say that I am frequently described as atypical in some ways with regard to being a man.. And I've thought about why that is so, and where that came from. I was raised largely by women and I often saw the world through women's eyes. And I saw family life very often through women's eyes as opposed to men's eyes....That's not to say I also didn't get a lot of what are considered traditional male messages....my personal history from the time that I got married until now, a lot of it has been letting go of a lot of what I would say are those traditional roles.

Finally, it seemed that the men who had achieved an integration between the masculine and feminine aspects of self were able to transcend societal expectations of what was expected of them during the bereavement process. While they may have felt the pull to act or behave in certain ways, there was an awareness and acceptance of that pull, but less need to respond to it. For example, Adam talked about his experience of talking to a hospice counselor after his wife died. His comment reflected a level of introspection and acceptance of his own personal style. He stated:

Hospice provided a counselor for me to talk to. And although I enjoyed those talks to some extent, I felt as though I had plenty of people in my life to talk to. And even though I liked talking about Annie, I didn't feel as though it was terribly important for me as a part of my grieving process to talk to a lot of people a lot of the time about it. And, as a person, I don't feel as though my emotions are unavailable to me, nor did I feel that I can't talk about them. I talked when I needed to, I just didn't feel as if I needed to talk about them a lot.

Similarly, David gave the following response to the question about men's experiences with grief:

I guess I'm having trouble connecting with your question, because your question implies that there is a male way of dealing with this...And, I don't know what the male model is for it. If I had to guess, I would say it is denial and avoidance, which is what I did in previous brushes with death, and I don't think I did it with this one. You know, I'm having a hard time saying well, what I did was steeped in my maleness.

#### General Impressions of the Relationship Between Grief and Masculinity

Although not a direct linear relationship, there does seem to be a relationship between adherence to stereotypical gender role and the utilization of certain coping strategies. This relationship was most apparent at the level of strict adherence, where men who identified most strongly with stereotypical notions of masculinity were more apt to cope by setting aside their feelings and by using more instrumental forms of coping. The next strongest relationship was seen in men who openly acknowledged their conflict with gender role. It was apparent that their conflict emerged in their grief process. At times, they felt pressure to behave certain ways and they colluded with that pressure. At other times, they felt more open to engage in a more expansive repertoire of coping behavior.

The relationship between coping strategies and the men who rejected gender norms and/or the men who exhibited a more integrated identity in relationship to gender was less strong. This is most likely related to the fact that their coping strategies reflected their individual identities more strongly than they reflected their masculine identity. These issues will be explored more fully in the discussion section.

### **Section III: Developing a Model of Bereavement**

The previous sections both described and delineated the behaviors and experiences of the nine participants. The description of these categories is vital to understanding a phenomenon, but the purpose of grounded theory is to go beyond breaking the data down into descriptive categories. The ultimate goal of grounded theory is to identify the connections between the experiences of these individual men and provide a conceptual understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The grounded theory model for male grief as identified by the present data analysis is presented in Figure 1.

#### **A Transactional Model of Male Bereavement**

##### Viewing the Model as a Transactional Process

This model was formulated to explain the manner that a man may grieve at any moment in time, as influenced by the specifics of his situation and personal history. Thus, the model should be viewed as cyclical and dynamic. The flow of the model is as follows: When a man experiences the death of a loved one, he is confronted with the immediate factors related to the death (or the context). In addition to the basic sequelae associated with the situation (e.g. who, how and when the person died), he is also confronted by his own history, personality and experiences with death (the mediating factors). Depending upon these situational variables, he will select certain strategies to cope with the situation and his chosen coping style will result in one of several consequences. He will either be placed in more distress, find some sort of equilibrium, or make a qualitative step toward reconciling his grief.

Central to understanding the model is realizing that any change in the context, the mediating factors, or the viability of coping strategies will shift the grief response. For example, an individual who is depressed in response to bereavement may find new social support which allows him to engage in expressive coping, and then results in less depression and isolation. Similarly, a person who is coping relatively well could experience another loss (e.g. a divorce); may start spending all of their time at work, begin

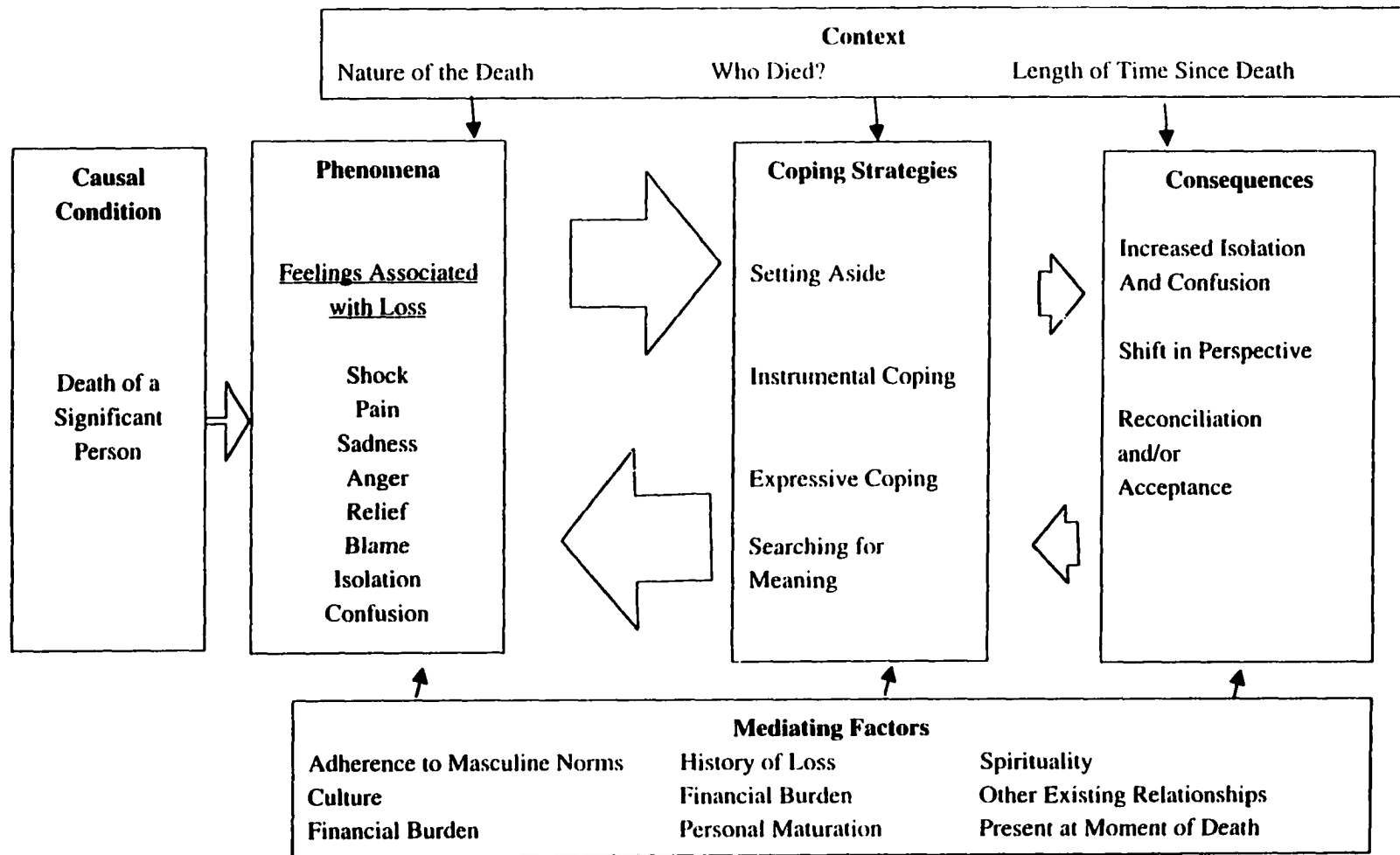


Figure 1 - A Transactional Model of Male Bereavement

isolating from others, and numbing their feelings. In this situation, the grief associated with the initial loss may become magnified and the person may enter a phase where they cope differently and become depressed. Thus, a change in context creates a change in experience. Considering the frequent changes that occur in the context of one's life, the reader should attempt to visualize a dynamic, open ended, constantly evolving response of an individual in his attempt to reconcile the death of a loved one.

A more in depth explanation of specific components of the Transactional Model of Male Grief is as follows:

#### Causal Conditions

For the purpose of this study, the cause of bereavement was the death of a loved one. There are other life events that create feelings associated with loss, but this model is directly derived from the experience of loss by death. The only criteria for this variable is sufficient attachment to the person who died to produce a grief response.

#### Phenomenon

The phenomena which emerges from the experience of having a loved one die results in the core psychological experience of grief. Grief is manifested by a variety of mood states. The experience of mood states is not just an affective experience, but is a broad emotional reaction that manifests itself affectively, cognitively, physically, spiritually, and behaviorally (Doka and Martin, 2000, p. 16). The core emotions which emerge as a direct result of loss are: shock, loss, pain, sadness, anger, relief, blame, depression and isolation. Some may experience all of the aforementioned emotions. Others may report an emotional experience primarily dominated by one of these mood states.

#### Context

The experience of certain emotions and mood states are directly impacted by the contextual factors associated with grief: (a) the nature of the death, (b) the relationship to the deceased, and (c) the time since the person died. Specifically, the intensity, duration,

and frequency of feelings are directly influenced by the quality of the relationship with the deceased. Who were they? What role did they play in the person's life? Similarly, what was the nature of their death? Was it expected or unexpected? Was the death traumatic? Similarly, how much time has passed since the person died? Has there been an opportunity for healing? All of these factors influence the emotional intensity of the experience, as well as the specific coping strategy that is employed.

### Mediating Factors

In addition to the context, a person's grief experience will be influenced by the broader structural context of their lives. Specifically, the way a person manages their thoughts and emotions is impacted by structural variables such as: (a) adherence to masculine norms, (b) history of loss, (c) culture, (d) financial burden, (e) being present at the moment of death, (f) other existing attachments, (g) spirituality, and (h) personal maturation. For example, a male who adheres strictly to prescribed masculine role will manage his emotions differently from a man who feels less constrained by those roles. Similarly, someone with strong religious beliefs will be more likely to access those beliefs when attempting to find meaning from the experience of death.

The presence and absence of each of these mediating conditions, along with the context of the person's death is what creates the uniqueness of each individual's experience of grief and loss. Similarly, an individual's experience with different deaths will vary as the intervening conditions in their life shift. No death will be experienced in exactly the same way.

### Strategies for Managing and Coping with Grief

The four major strategies for coping with grief were: (a) setting aside, (b) instrumental coping, (c) expressive coping, and (d) searching for meaning. The first strategy, setting aside, was used primarily as a means to continue functioning in the face of adversity. At times, there seemed to be pressure from self or others to keep functioning, thus it was too overwhelming to both function outwardly as well as manage the emotions

associated with the loss. Setting aside seemed to provide the opportunity to put emotions aside until there was a more opportune time to confront them.

Instrumental coping provided an effective way to manage emotions during a crisis. Actively participating in caretaking or attending to the pragmatic aspects of grief provided two functions. First, it is often necessary for someone to attend to the functional details of death and dying as there are real problems that need to be solved and tasks which need to be performed. Second, instrumental coping provides a way to act in response to overwhelming feelings and circumstances. As one participant in the study so eloquently stated, "It is in the doing that the grieving takes place."

As opposed to setting aside and instrumental coping which help one manage emotions, expressive coping often spawns emotional change. Via directly acknowledging and sitting with feelings, the men create the possibility of further change and growth in response to the loss. Thus expressive coping is a way to sink into the middle of the grief experience, to feel it, memorialize it, and understand it. The fourth coping strategy, searching for meaning, functions as a vehicle for accepting loss. It is both a coping strategy and a result of other forms of coping. Certain actions, such as reflection and giving back to the community, create an opportunity for acceptance and reconciliation.

#### Consequences of Chosen Strategies

As a result of context, mediating factors, and preferred coping strategies, men experience a variety of reactions to the death of the significant other. Some experience greater levels of depression and isolation, while others experience attenuated or moderated feelings. Still, others find meaning in the experience and are able to shift their cognitive perspective and/or find some level of resolution concerning the loss.

Suffice it to say that there is not a linear process to grieving. No one coping strategy or mediating factor will lead to a specific form of resolution. Men are dynamic individuals and their lives are constantly in flux. While there may be phases of grief responses (e.g. increased depression, a shift in perspective; some level of resolution), these phases change

as the mediating factors in the person's life change. Thus, the consequences of chosen strategies are not really consequences; but simply reactions which are part of a larger dynamic process.

#### Implications of a Transactional Model

This model is different from other models of bereavement because it demonstrates that a man's experience of grief is not centered in the self, but in the context of his experience. The development of self and certain coping styles are important, but are not the only factors which significantly impact his experience. To fully understand the male experience of grief and loss, it is necessary to acknowledge that a person is male and may have been socialized in a certain manner, but is it equally important to understand the influence of other factors such as his financial situation or his personal history with loss. It is also helpful to realize that the bereaved individual will develop and the circumstances of his life will change, as will his experience of bereavement.

Concordant with this line of thinking, it is important to realize that masculinity, as it influences a man's experience with grief and loss, is only one factor which determines the context of a man's experience. The experience of grief is greater than gendered behavior and one can not say that a particular man will grieve in a certain way, unless they understand the complexity of his environment and his lifestyle. The reason, however, that gender becomes a useful construct to study is because it demonstrates the clinical complexity of the experience of grief. For example, when using this model to understand an individual man's experience of grief and loss, insight into his definition of masculinity can provide some information about which coping strategies will be most readily accessible to him. Most likely, a man who adheres strictly to gender norms will feel more comfortable with instrumental forms of coping, whereas a man who has transcended traditional norms with regard to masculine role may demonstrate a more diverse range of coping. The implications of this knowledge are important, but are only one of the mediating factors which influence his experience. For some, definitions of masculinity will

have a greater influence on their experience than others, but it is only within the dynamics of a more complex model that that part of his experience will make any sense. If a clinician or researcher attempts to understand gender separate from the other mediating variables identified in this model, their description and understanding of the participant's experience will be incomplete.

## DISCUSSION

### Limitations of the Research

In interpreting the utility of these findings, it is useful to reflect on the limitations of qualitative research. One possible limitation is small sample size. The present study interviewed nine men, thus the generalizability of the results is limited to the experience of these nine men. Similarly, there was limited diversity in the sampling of participants. Eight of the men were European American and one was Mexican American, thus their experience is not representative of other ethnic groups. The sample was also limited in that it only looked at grief in response to death. Thus, these findings can not be generalized to other forms of loss. Despite limitations in generalizability, small sample size can be a strength because it allows for a deeper understanding of participants' experiences. In fact, qualitative inquiry usually uses small samples, which are selected for their ability to address the research question and to provide data which is most informative. Thus, whatever the present inquiry may lack in breadth is counterbalanced by the depth and richness of the inquiry (Creswell, 1998).

It may also be worth noting that qualitative researchers view generalizability differently from quantitative researchers. Specifically, within the qualitative paradigm the purpose is usually to define, in depth, the particular aspects of a phenomenon. The purpose is not to claim some universal truth about the applicability of the findings to other populations (Patton, 1990). It is, however, considered appropriate to make some thoughtful, yet speculative extrapolations from the data set (Patton, 1990). Consequently, in the current study, the Transactional Model of Male Grief presented in the results section should be viewed in two ways. It was primarily created to explain the experience of the nine participants. In the ensuing discussion, the researcher does, however, extrapolate

from the ideas generated from the ideas generated in the model to make speculative comments about men's experiences with grief and loss. These extrapolations, however, should be viewed as a working hypothesis which has relevance in some contexts, but not in others. It should also be noted that extrapolation from this data set may occur in a different way. Specifically, a reader can read the descriptions of these participant's experiences and make their own interpretation as to how the experiences are similar or dissimilar from their own. Thus, in qualitative researcher, it is often left up to the reader to make decisions about generalizability.

Another potential limitation of the study was the self-selection of participants. Stroebe and Stroebe (1989-90) found that widowers who refused to participate in an interview about their loss are more depressed than widowers who agree to participate in such an interview. It is possible, therefore, that the men who volunteered to participate in the study are somehow "atypical" in their grief. One aspect of the present study that may have controlled for self-selection bias is that the participants were recruited by persons with whom they already had a relationship. Thus, the men did not actively seek participation in the study. In fact, several of the men alluded to the fact that they were participating because they trusted the referring person. Also, nine of the ten men contacted chose to be a part of the study, thus their decision to participate did not seem to be atypical.

#### Evaluation of Qualitative Research

Despite some limitations, it is important to remember that qualitative research is evaluated on a different set of criteria than quantitative research. Howe and Eisenhart (1990) suggest that readers ask two questions when evaluating qualitative research. First, does the research question have utility for professionals in the field? Second, does the researcher make effective use of the data collection and analysis techniques? For example, did the investigator identify biases, conduct adequate interviews, and attempt to triangulate the data with relevant resources (such as the literature or clinical lore)? Another way to evaluate qualitative research is to query its usefulness in expanding comprehension of the

topic (Eisner, 1991). The usefulness of the findings is determined by evaluating the coherence of the theory that is generated. For example, one might ask if the theory makes sense, or if it is consistent with other theoretical findings. Based on the aforementioned evaluative criteria, the remainder of the discussion will focus on identifying the usefulness of the present findings, as well as relating the results to other theoretical notions of masculine grief.

### The Contextual Nature of Bereavement

A primary purpose of this study was to investigate men's experience of grief without comparing their experience to women. In conjunction with studying men alone, the use of qualitative methods minimizes the tendency to look for expected bereavement patterns. Thus, by conducting a research study which uses an open form of inquiry (as opposed to using an inventory or a survey), the present investigation was able to move beyond some of the conceptual ruts found in the literature about male grief. In addition to allowing for the emergence of alternative coping styles in response to loss, the present study provides a contextual understanding of each participant's experience, making it possible to create a more comprehensive model of masculine bereavement.

Perhaps the most striking result in this study is the revelation that the psychological phenomenon of grief is driven as much by the context of one's situation as by the psychological characteristics of the bereaved individual. In other words, as opposed to localizing the experience of grief either within the individual or within the phenomenon itself, this model elucidates that the experience of grief can only be understood via the context of an individual's life story. For example, the experience of a 10 year old boy whose mother dies of cancer is qualitatively different from the experience of a 39 year-old gay man whose lover dies of AIDS. Similarly, a 63 year-old man whose second wife dies of ovarian cancer will live through a different experience than a 55 year-old man whose wife is killed in a bike accident.

In understanding the uniqueness of their stories it becomes clear that there is no unilateral definition of grief or of masculine grief. What is similar for the participants in this study is the experience of loss, but that loss is felt differently, depending upon the specifics of the situation (e.g. one's personal history of loss, culture, financial burden, spirituality, personal maturation, adherence to masculine norms, and other contextual variables). This finding is consistent with postmodern inquiry, which has consistently challenged positivistic assumptions that there is a single meaning of reality that can be classified and observed (Riger, 1992). Postmodernists are less concerned with the meaning of reality and more concerned with understanding how meaning is constructed at any moment in time (Gergen, 1985). The present study demonstrates that the bereavement experience of an individual is more related to the context of their life than to an innate personality characteristic.

One might take this line of thinking a step further and argue that the experience of grief is not related to being male or female, but is related to being human. While adhering to masculine norms of behavior or rejecting masculine norms for behavior has an impact on the coping strategies that one employs, gender role adherence is only one piece of an individual's life story. In fact the realization that gender, a piece of the context of one's experience, can have such a strong impact creates an argument for the necessity of research which socially deconstructs a phenomenon. It demonstrates that when you start deconstructing one aspect of an experience, many other variables and factors will follow.

Although only part of the context of a man's experience with grief and loss, let's consider how deconstructing the notion of masculinity influences the way we understand bereavement. Traditional theories of bereavement tend to emphasize emotion-focused coping in response to grief and tend to misrepresent the male experience (Doka & Martin, 1998). The present study debunks some stereotypical gender assumptions about masculine grief and demonstrates that the participants use both instrumental and expressive coping strategies when responding to their loss. In addition to engaging in stereotypical masculine

patterns of grieving (e.g. dealing with pragmatic aspects of the loss), they engaged in more traditional forms of grief work (e.g. sitting with feelings of loss). An interesting aspect about the grief “work” that these men did is that it looked different from the emotional expression of grief that one would expect to see based on traditional models of bereavement. For example, there seems to be some expectation that if someone is feeling sad about a loss that they will share that experience with others. The majority of men in this study chose to deal with their emotions in private. Thus, their expression of the emotional aspects of grief (feeling loss) may not have been as visible to others, but it was tangibly expressed during their interviews. In fact, emotions were so relevant to these men’s experience, they set the context for the entire grief experience. Unfortunately, however, the grief “work” being done by these men has been invisible to the eyes of past bereavement research because that research has not identified certain behaviors as being part of the grief process. Based on these results it is easy to see that the deconstruction of a simple concept such as expressive coping is necessary to expand traditional definitions of behavior.

#### Extension of the Dual Process Model

In many ways the present model provided some empirical support for Stroebe and Schut’s (1999) Dual Process Model of coping with bereavement. According to The Dual Process Model, when people are bereaved, they oscillate between both loss and restoration-oriented coping. Loss-orientation refers to processing some aspect of the loss, whereas restoration-orientation refers to the way one responds to living after the person has died (e.g. forming a new identity and attending to life changes) (Stroebe, 1998). The Transactional Model of Male Grief identified in this paper demonstrates that grief is a dynamic process, similar to the oscillation described by Stroebe and Schut (1999).

Where the Transactional Model extends the Dual Process Model is that it identifies alternative coping strategies which can be included in both loss-oriented and restoration-oriented coping. For example, with regard to coping strategies, the present study identifies

the process of setting aside feelings associated with grief. This process is qualitatively different from denial or avoidance described in the Dual Process Model in that it involves planned period of putting emotions aside. In this form of coping, the emotional work is not denied, but is conducted more in pieces. Similarly, the present model introduces the notions of searching for meaning in the loss. This is different than “breaking bonds” or “forming a new identity” which are identified in the Dual Process Model, in that searching for meaning also involves making sense of the experience. Thus the Transactional Model expands the possibility of behaviors which can be categorized as loss-oriented and restoration-oriented coping

A second way that this model extends the Dual Process Model is that it takes into account some of the socialization factors which influence how much an individual uses a particular coping strategy. For example, it was identified that financial burden is qualitatively related to the experience of bereavement. Two of these men were faced with financial difficulty after someone in their family died. Subsequently, they had little time to focus on the emotional expression of grief as they were more worried how their family was going to pay their bills. As a result, their emotional work around grief was postponed. Thus, by considering contextual factors such as financial burden, culture, or personal history of loss, one may begin to understand the situations which encourage or suppress an individual's tendency to engage in either loss-oriented or restoration-oriented tasks.

Despite some support for the Dual Process Model, one also might argue that Stroebe and Schut's model falls short of its attempt to describe the experiences of men and women because it focuses on finding difference in bereavement between men and women. Subsequently, it does not explain why a man may engage in loss-orientation at one point in time and restoration-oriented coping at another point in time. The following quote demonstrates a conceptual framework which focuses on biological difference. According to Stroebe (1998, p. 11) the distinction between restoration-oriented coping and loss-oriented coping explains some of the male-female differences in bereavement. She states:

Men and women go about grieving in very different ways, a major component of which has been described through the loss-restoration distinction. Women are more confronting of their emotions of grief, whereas men are more likely to confront the practical tasks that bereavement brings and perhaps to lose themselves in work. If there is too little oscillation (if men are too restoration-oriented, women too loss-oriented) then the course of adjustment to bereavement will be hampered.

In describing the hypothesized relationship between biological sex and the Dual Process Model, Stroebe also states that further research needs to be conducted to understand the underlying mechanisms behind these differences. She also notes that even when both men and women are loss oriented, they may have different ways of approaching that loss orientation (Stroebe, 1998).

The present study, by examining adherence to stereotypical notions of masculinity, was able to account for some of these differences in approach to both loss and restoration orientation. Specifically, it looked at the social construction of gender as a possible underlying mechanism related to difference in coping style. With regard to the social construction of gender, it was clear that all nine participants had different beliefs about what it meant to be a man. It was also apparent that their beliefs influenced their behavior. All were aware to some extent of the cultural prescriptions of masculine behavior, but it was the extent to which they identified with masculine stereotypes that impacted their experience with grief. Specifically, the men who adhered most rigidly to stereotypical notions of masculinity were less likely to use the full range of coping styles available to them. Conversely, the men who either rejected or transcended stereotypical notions of masculine behavior accessed a wider range of coping behavior.

#### Gender Role, Coping Behaviors, and Psychological Health

Considering the influence of gender role adherence on coping style, the next obvious question is do individuals who access a wider range of coping behavior have a healthier adaptation to bereavement? In the present study, there did seem to be a relationship between the ability to reject and/or transcend gender role and one's resolution of grief. Specifically the subset of men who either transcended or rejected gender role

seemed to have found more equilibrium in their lives after the death. Conversely, the two men who reflected a more stereotypical masculine response to grief were functioning, in that they were coping outwardly with the day to day tasks in their lives, but they expressed more isolation and confusion than the other men. The men who were in conflict with gender role spanned both sides of the equation. Some had reached strong resolution to their loss, others were still in the process of doing so.

These results may elucidate why there have been such equivocal findings in relation to whether widows or widowers experience greater distress after a death. Most likely, the answer is not rooted in biological sex, but in the expansiveness of the person's coping repertoire. Perhaps it is the men and women who are adhering more strongly to gender role expectation that are adapting less well to bereavement. This hypothesis is in corroboration with other intervention research which suggests that healthy adaptation is related to the ability to fluctuate between coping styles, as opposed to adhering strictly to one coping strategy in adaptation to loss. Specifically in relation to gender, Schut, Stroebe, Stroebe, De Keijser & Van den Bout (1997), found that if you teach widows and widowers to cope in the opposite style expected for their sex, they demonstrate less distress later in their bereavement experience.

The idea that strict adherence to gender role can affect psychological adaptation is also being supported in recent research that examines the relationship between gender role conflict messages and psychological health. Mahalik and Courmoyer (2000) found that gender role conflict can differentiate depressed from non-depressed men. In their research, gender role conflict is said to occur when, "rigid sexist, or restrictive gender roles, learned during socialization, result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of other self" (Mahalik, 2000, p. 5). Specifically, they found that depressed men tend to be more likely than non-depressed men to define success professionally, than by other factors in their lives. Additionally, they found that depressed men report more conflict between work and family. These findings are similar to those reported by Sharpe and Heppner (1991) who

found that men who demonstrate restricted emotionality report more problems with intimacy. This research does not imply that masculine role is psychologically unhealthy, but it does provide some evidence that flexibility of gender role behavior is related to psychological health.

#### Extension of Theories of Masculine Grief

In addition to expanding the contextual framework from which we understand the experience of bereavement, the deconstruction of gender allows for an extension of the present studies on male grief which are searching for patterns of masculine adaptation to bereavement. Doka and Martin (1998) contend that there are many ways to adapt to loss and that instrumental or masculine patterns have been obfuscated in the literature. In lieu of these oversights, they propose a masculine pattern of grief which is characterized by moderated feelings, a focus on cognitions, problem-focused activity, and a desire for solitude. Carverhill (1997) also identifies a pattern of masculine grief that identifies a tendency to focus on problem solving, action, and solitude.

The present study does corroborate these findings in that it demonstrates that men do use coping strategies that have not been actively identified in previous models of bereavement. For example, this study identifies that men are grieving in private, that they are often expressing their feelings while engaged in another task, and that they are often try to make sense of their loss by engaging in concrete tasks or by giving back to the community. Where this study goes beyond other studies on male bereavement is that it also identifies the context within which men are grieving. When one begins to view the context, it becomes apparent that men are engaged in expressive coping as well as instrumental coping. They are seeking support, sharing with a confidant, and at times, crying openly. In essence, what they are doing, is fluctuating between different coping strategies. At times they may be setting aside their feelings in order to focus on more restoration-oriented tasks. At other times, they may seek support from others. Then, they may move back to a phase of needing solitude. Their grief is reflected by a dynamic,

fluctuating pattern of behavior and is not mediated by a constant, biologically determined pattern.

The perspective that grief is a dynamic process is different from other models of masculine grief because it does not emphasize biological differences among individuals. In a recent book, Martin and Doka (2000), who have written extensively about male grief, describe three types of grievers; instrumental, intuitive, and blended. In the instrumental pattern of grief, the grief is expressed physically or cognitively. In the intuitive pattern, grief is experienced more affectively, whereas the blended pattern is a combination of these two grieving styles. In a 1998 paper, Doka and Martin called instrumental grief, "masculine grief," and described the intuitive pattern of grief as a more "conventional" form of grief which has historically been associated with women. The change in terminology was made because it has been clearly identified that some men grieve in traditionally feminine ways while some women grieve in traditionally masculine ways.

Coining gender neutral terms is important because it acknowledges that gendered behavior is not always related to biological sex. I would argue, however, that changing the names does not necessarily move away from stereotypical assumptions about gender and gender role, and that this type of thinking is still ensnared by focusing on the difference between men and women. In order to fully explain this point, it is necessary to understand the way that gender has been treated in psychological research.

#### Historical Approaches to Studying Gender

Historically, there have been three approaches understanding gender difference (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1990; Tavris, 1991). One position is to assume that women are opposite and lesser than men. This assumption has been the one that is most obvious and readily attacked by feminist theorists. This assumptive framework blatantly places men as the human standard and compares all female behavior to that standard.

A second way to study gender is to assume that women are opposite and superior. This position is equally flawed because it is still committed to dividing women and men

into different camps and falls fails to understand the “law of the excluded middle (Tavris, 1991, p. 99).” The law of the excluded middle argues that by dividing the world into opposites, we lose the common ground which is the place that most men and women fall with regard to their beliefs, values and actions (Tavris, 1991). The obsessive focus on difference reinforces stereotypes and prevents researchers from identifying that there is as much diversity among men as there is between men and women. Thus any conceptual framework which focuses on difference will be incomplete because it is still seeks to identify one sex as the norm and the other as being deviant from that norm.

Hence, the feeling by some men that their experience has been discounted in the grief literature is simply the intuitive experience of being thought of as “less than” or deviant from traditional conceptualizations of grief. Their experience is one that women have been experiencing for years in response to psychological models which include gender bias. If a theory fails to understand the law of the excluded middle, the research will not adequately describe the experience of bereavement among all men. It is within the diversity of men's experiences that the true nature of masculine grief will be understood. If one stays entrenched in biological, dichotomous thinking about a psychological phenomenon, the context of the experience will be lost, and the theory will not adequately explain a person's experience across time and situations.

This is not to say that researchers should argue that men grieve just like women. Such a framework is also flawed because it fails to identify the differences that do exist between women and men (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1990; Tavris, 1991). Women are not just like men and men are not just like women. There are differences, but the difficulty in discussing difference is that there seems to be a tendency to understand difference as deviance. Instead of thinking of difference as deviance, we should be thinking of men and women as different, yet equal. There is no need for one group to assimilate, but there is a need for understanding the continuum of human responses to grief; most of which are not related to biological sex. Rather than focusing on difference, we should be concentrating

on the healthy pattern of grief associated with each individual style. Similarly, as opposed to extending psychological theories of bereavement which were originally created within an assumptive framework that was gender biased, we should be creating new frameworks which understand the limitations of searching for biological difference.

### Clinical Implications

In addition to considering the social construction of gender in our research, it seems it is also important for clinicians to understand that a client's social construction of masculine role will vary. To take this a step further, the therapist may be making a huge oversight if they fail to do a gender role analysis when performing a psychological assessment (Brown, 1990). The failure to do so could lead to an incomplete understanding of a client's needs. After conducting a gender-role analysis, it becomes apparent that the therapeutic intervention used with a man who has rejected traditional masculine role will be different from the intervention used with a man who identifies more strongly with traditional gender role behavior. For example, Carverhill (1997) suggests that one way for therapists to help bereaved men is to "encourage movement beyond traditional gender roles." Similarly, (Mahalik, 2000, p. 11) states:

Whereas the male socialization process encourages developing a sense of self through renouncing femininity, interpersonal psychotherapy can help men who experience gender role conflict to integrate parts of themselves that have been underdeveloped.

Mahalik also states that:

Instead of punishing the male client for expression his emotional needs as the media, family, and his peers have done since his earliest years, the therapist has the opportunity to reinforce the client's fledgling attempts at emotional expression. (Mahalik, 2000, pg. 11-12).

These types of interpersonal interventions are important, but may be more helpful for some men than for others. Thus, it is necessary for clinicians to have an in depth understanding of their client's world view regarding their own masculinity.

Actually, one can take this argument a step further. In addition to advocating that a clinician have an in depth awareness of gender and gender role conflict, it can be argued that a clinician must also realize that gender is not a static construct. The present research indicates that certain men, particularly those who experience some conflict regarding gender socialization, will exhibit stereotypically masculine behaviors in some situations, but not in others. Thus, one must understand the meaning that an individual man gives to masculine role, as his definition of masculinity will differ from someone else's.

To summarize, in the bereavement literature, as well as research on psychological health, there needs to be movement away from unilateral prescriptions of gendered behavior as it is creating a myopic view of the way we view bereavement. Particularly in the field of thanatology, the ardent investigation of gender difference is distancing researchers from the common ground between masculine and feminine grief. As opposed to asking what is male grief or female grief, we should be asking, what is healthy bereavement? And, based on the social construction of a person's lived experience, what is healthy for him or her as an individual?

## REFERENCES

- Allen, K. & Baber, K. (1992). Ethical and epistemological tensions in applying a postmodern perspective to feminist research. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 16, 1-15.
- Averill, J.R. (1968). Grief: Its nature and significance. Psychological Bulletin, 70, 721-748.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). Attachment and loss. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1980). Loss: Sadness and separation. New York: Basic Books.
- Brabant, S., Forsyth, C.J., & Melancon, C. (1992). Grieving men: Thoughts, feelings, and behaviors following deaths of wives. The Hospice Journal, 8(4), 33-47.
- Brod, H. (1987). The case for men's studies. In H. Brod (Ed.). The making of masculinities (pp. 39-62). Boston: Allen & Unwin.
- Brown, L. (1990). Taking account of gender in the clinical assessment interview. Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 21(1), 12-17.
- Busik, B.S. (1989). Grieving as a hero's journey. Hospice Journal, 5(1), 89-105.
- Carverhill, P.A. (1997). Bereaved men: How therapists can help. Psychotherapy in Private Practice, Vol. 16(4), 1-15.
- Carverhill, P.A. (1998, February). Men Talk: A phenomenological study of male spousal bereavement. Paper presented at the meeting of the Association for Death Education and Counseling, Chicago, IL.
- Cook, A.S. & Dworkin, D.S. (1992). Helping the bereaved: Therapeutic interventions for children, adolescents, and adults. New York: Harper Collins.
- Cook, J.A. (1983). A death in the family: Parental bereavement in the first year. Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior, 13, 42-61.

- Cook, J.A. (1988). Dad's double binds: Rethinking father's bereavement from a men's studies perspective, Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 12(3), 285-308.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- DeFrain, J. (1991). Learning about grief from normal families: SIDS, stillbirth, and miscarriage. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 17(3), 215-232.
- Doka, K.J. & Martin, T. (1998). Masculine response to loss: Clinical implications. Journal of Family Studies, 4(2), 143-158.
- Dyregrov, A., & Matthiesen, S.B. (1987). Similarities and differences in mother's and father's grief following the death of an infant. Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 28, 1-15.
- Eisner, E. (1991). The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice. New York: Macmillan.
- Farberow, N.L., Gallagher, D.E., Gilewski, M.J., & Thompson, L.W. (1992). The role of social supports and their vicissitudes in the bereavement of surviving spouses of suicide and natural deaths. Suicide and Life Threatening behavior, 22(1), 107-124.
- Fish, W.C. (1986). Differences in grief intensity in bereaved parents. In T.A. Rando (Ed.) Parental loss of a child. Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Freud, S. (1917). Mourning and Melancholia. In J. Strachey (Ed.), The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud (Volume 14). London: Hogarth Press, 1957.
- Gergen, K.J. (1985). The social constructivist movement in modern psychology. American Psychologist, 40, 266-275.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory. Chicago: Aldine.

Glick, I.O., Weiss, R.S. & Parkes, C.M. (1974). The first year of bereavement. New York: Wiley.

Harding, S. (1987). Introduction: Is there a feminist method? In S. Harding (Ed.), Feminism and methodology. Bloomington, Indiana University.

Hare-Mustin, R.T. & Marecek, J. (1988). The meaning of difference: Gender theory, postmodernism and psychology. American Psychologist, 43(6), 455-464.

Hare-Mustin, R.T. & Marecek, J. (1990). Gender and the meaning of difference: Postmodernism and psychology. In R.T. Hare-Mustin & J. Marecek (Eds.), Making a difference: Psychology and the construction of gender. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hawkesworth, M.E. (1990). Beyond oppression: Feminist theory and political strategy. New York: Continuum.

Howe, K. & Eisenhart, M. (1990). Standards for qualitative (and quantitative) research: A prolegomenon. Educational Researcher, 19, 2-9.

Kubler-Ross, K.E. (1969). On death and dying. New York: MacMillan.

Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. London: Sage.

Lindemann, E. (1944). Symptomology and management of acute grief. American Journal of Psychiatry, 101, 141-148.

Lister, L. (1991). Men and grief: A review of research. Special Issue: Men and men's issues in social work theory and practice. Smith College Studies in Social Work, 61(3), 220-235.

Mahalik, J.R. (2000). Interpersonal psychotherapy with men who experience gender role conflict. Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 30, 5-13.

Mahalik, J.R. & Courmoyer, R.J. (2000). Identifying gender role conflict messages that distinguish mildly depressed from nondepressed men. Psychology of Men and Masculinity, 1(2), 109-115.

Martin, T. & Doka, K. (2000). Men don't cry. Women do. Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis.

McHugh, M.C., Koeske, R.D. & Frieze, I.H. (1986). Issues to consider in conducting nonsexist psychological research: A guide for reviewers. American Psychologist, 41(8), 879-890.

Parkes, C.M., & Brown, R.J. (1972). Health after bereavement: A controlled study of young Boston widows and widowers. Psychosomatic Medicine, 34, 449-461.

Patton, M.Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods. Newbury Park: Sage.

Peppers, I.G., & Knapp, R.S. (1980). Motherhood and mourning: Perinatal death. New York: Praeger.

Raphael, B. (1982). The Anatomy of bereavement. New York: Basic Books.

Raphael, B., Middleton, W., Martinek, N., & Misso, V. (1993). Counseling and therapy of the bereaved. In Stroebe, M., Stroebe, W., & Hansson, R. (Eds.). Handbook of bereavement (pp. 427-453). Cambridge: University Press.

Riger, S. (1992). Epistemological debates, feminist voices: Science, social values, and the study of women. American Psychologist, 47, 730-738.

Rosenblatt, P.C. (1993). Grief: the social context of private feelings, In Stroebe, M.S., Stroebe, W. & Hansson, R.O. (Eds.), Handbook of bereavement: Theory research and intervention. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Sampson, E.E. (1985). The decentralization of identity: Toward a revised concept of person and social order. American Psychologist, 40, 1203-1211.

Sanders, C.M. (1979). The use of the MMPI in assessing bereavement outcome. In C.M. Newton (Ed.), MMPI: Clinical research trends (pp. 223-247). New York: Praeger.

Schut, H.A., Stroebe, M., Stroebe, W., De Keijser, J., & Van den Bout, J. (1997). Intervention for the bereaved: Gender differences in the efficacy of grief counseling. British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 36, 63-72.

Schwab, R. (1990). Paternal and maternal coping with the death of a child. Death Studies, 14, 407-422.

Schwartzberg, S. S. (1992). AIDS-related bereavement among gay men: The inadequacy of current theories of grief, Psychotherapy, 29(3).

Scott, J.W. (1990). Deconstructing equality-versus-difference: or, the uses of poststructuralist theory for feminism. In M. Hirsch & E.F. Keller (Eds.), Conflicts in Feminism. New York: Routledge.

Scully, J. (1985). Men and grieving. Psychotherapy Patient, 2(1), 95-100.

Sharpe, M.J. & Heppner, P.P. (1991). Gender role, gender role conflict, and psychological well-being in men. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 38, 323-330.

Siegel, J.M. & Kendall, D.H. (1990). Loss, widowhood, and psychological distress among the elderly. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 58(5), 519-524.

Staudacher, C. (1991). Men and grief. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research. Newbury Park, Sage.

Stroebe, M.S. (1992-93). Coping with bereavement: A review of the grief work hypothesis. Omega, 26(1) 19-42.

Stroebe, M.S. (1998). New directions in bereavement research: Exploration of gender differences. Palliative Medicine, 12, 6-12.

Stroebe, M.S. & Schut, H. (1999). The dual process model of coping with bereavement: Rationale and description. Death Studies, 23, 197-224.

Stroebe, M.S. & Stroebe, W. (1983). Who suffers more? Sex differences in health risks of the widowed. Psychological Bulletin, 93(2),

Stroebe, W. & Stroebe, M.S. (1987). Bereavement and health. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Stroebe, M. & Stroebe, W. (1989-90). Who participates in bereavement research? A review and empirical study. Journal of Death and Dying, 20(1), 1-29.

Tavris, C. (1991). The mismeasure of woman: Paradoxes and perspectives in the study of gender. In Goodchilds, J.D. (Ed.) Psychological perspectives on human diversity in America (pp. 87-131). American Psychological Association.

Thompson, L., Gallagher-Thompson, D., Futterman, A., & Gilewski, M.J. (1991). The effects of late-life spousal bereavement over a 30-month interval. Psychology and Aging, 6(3), 434-441.

Tudiver, F. Hilditch, J. Permaul, McKendee, D. (1992). Does mutual help facilitate newly bereaved widowers? Report of a randomized control trial. Evaluation of the Health Professions, 15(2), 147-162.

Unger, R.K. & Crawford, M. (1998). Commentary: Sex and gender -- the troubled relationship between terms and concepts. In Anselmi, D. & Law, A. (Eds.) Questions of gender (pp. 18-21). Boston: McGraw Hill.

Volkan, V.D. (1981). Linking objects and linking phenomena: A study of the forms, symptoms, metapsychology, and therapy of complicated mourning. New York: International Universities Press.

Worden, J.W. (1982) Grief counseling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner. New York: Springer.

Worden, J.W. (1991). Grief counseling and therapy (2nd ed.). New York: Springer.

Wortman, C. & Silver, R. (1989). The myths of coping with loss. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 57(3), 349-357.